19/3-42

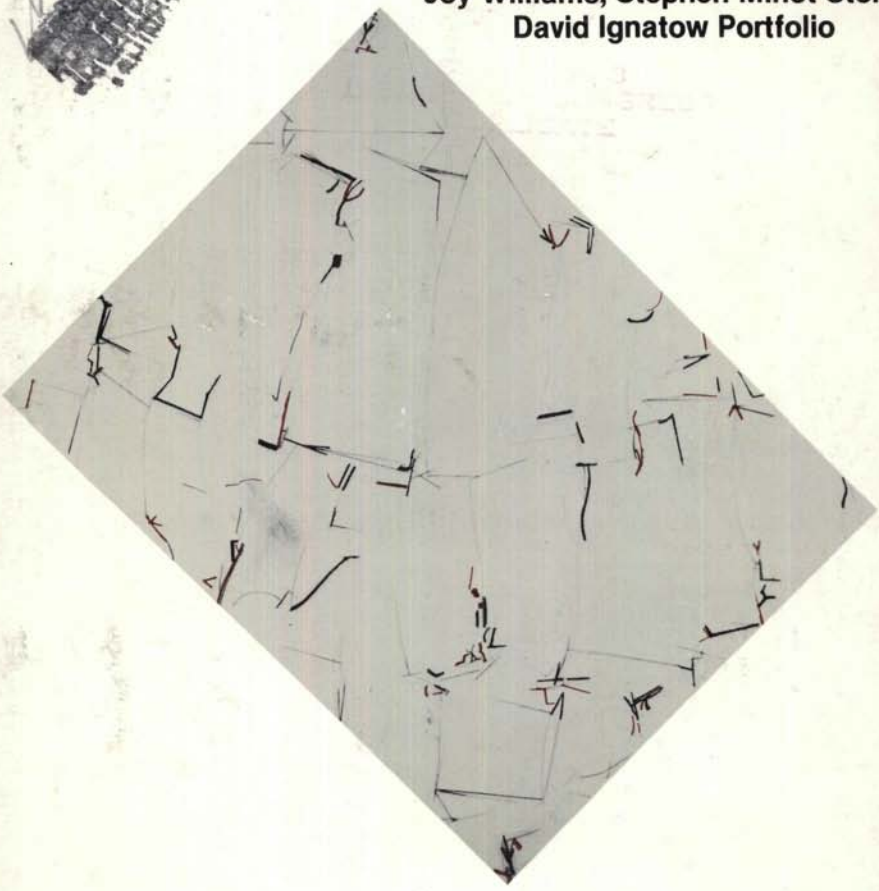
The Paris Review

72

$2.25 £1.35 11F

DEPARTMENT
FIELD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
WASHINGTON, D.C.
18-20
Lost, 72-74

Richard Wilbur Interview
Joy Williams, Stephen Minot Stories
David Ignatow Portfolio



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WRITERS AT WORK

The *Paris Review* interviews began in 1953 and continue today—a unique exploration of contemporary writers and writing. Recognized as an indispensable adjunct to modern literature, these interviews are also fascinating in their own right. Through searching questions addressed to great literary artists they reveal, better than anything else could, the minds and methods behind the published works.

NEW IN THE SERIES

WRITERS AT WORK: The PARIS REVIEW Interviews, FOURTH SERIES
Edited by George Plimpton and Introduced by Wilfrid Sheed
480 pages, 0-14-004543-0, $4.50

BACK IN PRINT

FIRST SERIES
Ed. & with an Intro. by Malcolm Cowley
320 pages, 0-14-004540-6, $3.95

SECOND SERIES
Ed. by George Plimpton & Intro. by Van Wyck Brooks
384 pages, 0-14-004541-1, $3.95

THIRD SERIES
Ed. by George Plimpton & Intro. by Alfred Kazin
384 pages, 0-14-004542-2, $3.95

Write for free catalogs

PENGUIN BOOKS
625 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good reading
from EXPOSITION PRESS

1 TIME AND TIMELESSNESS IN VIRGINIA WOOLF
Jill Morris

The tireless themes of Virginia Woolf—time, timelessness and reality—are explored in the light of her novels and diaries by writer-critic Jill Morris. Chronologically sifting through Mrs. Woolf's literary career, Miss Morris focuses sensitively on the relationship between the author's life and literary creation. Special attention is given to Mrs. Woolf's philosophical view of time, her use of time as a structural device and her conflicting attitudes toward death. What emerges is the picture of a brilliant artist whose passion to know order in life, time and art would ultimately brook no compromise.
Footnotes, biblio. **$6.00**

2 REALITY AND OTHER WRITINGS
Poetry and Prose by Richard H. James

The eternal struggle between the real and the ideal forms the basis of this candid collection of poetry and prose. Mr. James deplores the vacuity prevalent in the routines and conventions of daily life. In quest of a meaningful rationale for human existence, he probes the realm of enduring philosophical values.
$4.00

3 BITS O' THIS AND THAT
Poems by Frank A. Collins

Seldom does a poet reveal a surer knowledge of the moral boundaries of human life than Frank A. Collins. Reflecting the romantic idealism of the early years of the century, his poetry speaks with a ringing clarity. It is plain when he asks, "Where do you fit into this world?", that for Frank Collins, will and purpose, common sense and self-reliance are the ultimate human resources fitting men to their environment. To the contemporary mind, attuned to a more complex model of man, these poems will provide a refreshing review of the age of rugged individualism. **$4.00**

4 CHILDREN OF THE DAWN
A Novel by John Murray Alford

Eastern religious philosophy is conveyed through the mystical prose and rich imagery of John Murray Alford. In this dramatization of the Hindu cycle of regeneration and awareness, Janu, a spiritual guru, searches for disciples. In time, he brings a willing young group to his hidden mountain retreat and imparts his knowledge of Love, Understanding and Truth. Once the disciples attain Enlightenment, they return to the outer world to bring the Light to others. **$5.50**

5 ODES OF FEELING
Gertrude Libby Ducharme

Whimsical whittlings of a mind bemused by the fortuities of life. Mrs. Ducharme's themes are close to home, close to the inevitabilities common to all who tread the mortal path in search of love—and God. **$4.00**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good reading
from EXPOSITION PRESS

6 TOO WET TO PLOW
Americana and Homespun Philosophy in Beautiful Prose, Poetry and Art
Frank Fuis, Jr.

For the 99.99% of Americans who did not grow up in the Missouri Ozarks, author Frank Fuis, Jr. provides almost 400 pages of homespun Americana to show us what we missed. A multi-talented individual, Mr. Fuis produced his own artwork in addition to the written word. The result is a flood tide of backcountry memories and nostalgic commentary.

"Mr. Fuis has presented his poetry in an interesting and unique manner."—R.L. Vickery, Salem (Mo.) News

"This book should have a tremendous appeal . . . for everyone, regardless of where he lives in America."—Charlotte Jennings, Clinton (Tenn.) Courier-News **$12.00**

7 MILLION MEMORIES OF YOU
Poems by Henry J.

Contemporary free-verse poetry that treats love's kaleidoscopic whims in straightforward terms. The author clearly has lived with all the facets of love to which the flesh is heir. The simplicity of his language lends a vital force to his themes and moods. His poetry— soaring, brooding, always sensual—reaches every level of human consciousness. This excerpt from *First Time Gone . . . From 149* is an example:

Deep is only down;
forever is only tomorrow;
hurt is only limited pain.
Sweet is love, for in it
does one pass from time immortal
to time immediate, from unfilled past
to all-consuming present,
from self-love
to love of self,
where self is a mirror image
of all you would have me to be. **$5.50**

8 UNIVERSAL BLESSINGS
Poems by Leonard Freschner

Combining a genial philosophical outlook with a God-centered faith, Leonard Freschner's poetry proclaims the goodness of human life. His verse, addressed to such themes as love, tolerance and God's universal laws, portrays a man thoroughly comfortable with his portion of the universe. Distilled from the ordinary cycle of everyday life, his truths speak soothingly, unassailably, to the troubled mind of contemporary man. **$4.00**

9 THE SONG OF HERO
A Legend by Stephen DuVall

Ethereal, richly-textured poetic narrative that tells the tale of Hero, a mythological deity who comes to Earth to spread knowledge and destroy evil. Through the use of metaphor and lush imagery, the author paints an allegorical portrait of mankind's quest for ideal existence. A penetrating work reminiscent of Tolkein. **$4.00**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good reading
from EXPOSITION PRESS

10 ZAZA'S 7TH HUSBAND And Some Others
J. Leonard Douglas

Circling the globe eleven times has produced a host of experiences for J. Leonard Douglas which are eminently sharable. Filled with a cultivated wit and garnished with earthy humor, Mr. Douglas's reflections are rendered in an unusual collection of verses generously sprinkled with folklore from around the world. **$5.50**

11 ON LIFE AND LOVE
Poems by Linda Bircheat

Unfulfilled love is a central theme in Ms. Bircheat's thought. Its sting recurs when the sunny days and hand-in-hand walks on the beach are but distant memories. Loneliness and anxiety are other concerns that receive repeated treatment. Beneath the melancholy mood pervading many of these poems, an undercurrent of hope is discernible, ultimately in the form of faith. **$4.00**

12 BITS OF FAITH AND LOVE AND FUN
Poems by Mary Jane Meyer

The infinite blend of life's color wheel—life and death, nature's flux, familial devotion—invest the 75 poems presented in this collection. Mary Jane Meyer, using a well filled palette, chooses her colors thoughtfully so that each bit of faith, love and fun she depicts gleams with its own iridescent sparkle. **$4.50**

13 —TURN DOWN AN EMPTY GLASS
Poems by Frank A. Bartley

The heightened passions and disappointments of youth were sensitively recorded by Frank A. Bartley in the few short years of creativity allotted to him. Dead at 22, he leaves a legacy of poetic insight that showed promise of a life filled with wit, vitality and imagination. **$6.00**

ORDER FORM
EXPOSITION PRESS, INC.
Dept. PR Hicksville, N.Y. 11801 (516) 822-5700

Please send me the books circled below at the prices shown plus 75¢ postage and handling per copy. (Major credit card orders accepted by phone or mail, if $15 or more.) In N.Y. add tax.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13

Total Enclosed $ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Writers YOU CAN BENEFIT BY PUBLISHING YOUR BOOK WITH Exposition Press

If you're considering subsidy publishing, consider these facts:

• Only one subsidy publisher—Exposition Press—has turned rejected manuscripts into published books as handsome as the ones pictured on the preceding pages.

• Only one—Exposition Press—produces fine hardcover and paperback books in its own "under-one-roof" modern graphics complex in just 30 to 90 days. This means time and dollars saved for you, quality control, and books ready for sale sooner.

• Only one—Exposition Press—is publishing dozens of second and subsequent books for satisfied authors, including five novels in a row—just finished—for one author.

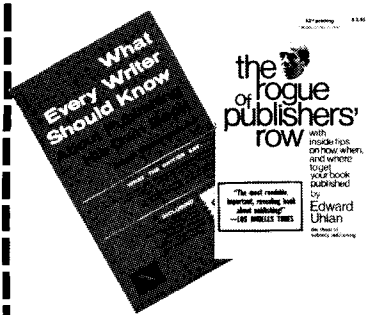
• Only one—Exposition Press—has received ever-increasing, favorable publicity and reviews on radio and TV, and in *Newsweek, The New York Times, Foreign Affairs,* and in many other prestigious publications across the country. Some of our authors have also been acclaimed by Stephen Spender, Robert Graves, Will Durant, and others.

Free manuscript appraisal

Write to us—or telephone today—to find out about our FREE, no-obligation manuscript appraisal service. The facts, the costs, and the low break-even may come as a pleasant and welcome surprise.

Poets, fiction writers—

Exposition Press offers a *special, low-cost, Limited Edition Plan* for fiction and poetry books of the highest quality. Before you self-publish or embark on any co-op ventures, find out how dozens of poets and fiction writers have published economically with us. Or write or call today.


What Every Writer Should Know
the rogue of publishers' row
with inside facts on how, when, and where to get your book published
by Edward Uhlan

CLIP OUT AND MAIL TODAY

2 FREE BOOKS FOR WRITERS

EXPOSITION PRESS, INC.
Dept. PR
900 South Oyster Bay Road,
Hicksville, N.Y. 11801 (516) 822-5700

☐ Please rush my FREE copies of THE ROGUE OF PUBLISHERS' ROW and WHAT EVERY WRITER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PUBLISHING HIS OWN BOOK so I can learn more about Exposition Press's famous 30-to-90 Day Publishing Plan and get the facts and costs about publishing my book.
☐ I have finished a book; its title is
☐ I have started a book; it will be finished by about

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shanda Lear meets Gaston J. Feeblebunny

and Positive Wassermann Johnson, and Mrs. Belcher Wack Wack, and Mrs. Friendly Ley, and dozens of other folks with outrageous monikers in this "comic masterpiece." —GEORGE PLIMPTON. "Absolutely wonderful!" —CHARLES ADDAMS. "Indispensable . . . a classic." —BRENDAN GILL.

REMARKABLE NAMES of Real People

compiled and annotated by

JOHN TRAIN

Introduction by S. J. Perelman
Illustrated by Pierre Le-Tan

Clarkson Potter, Inc.

$4.95; now at your bookstore, or send check to Crown Publishers, One Park Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10016. N.Y. and N.J. residents, add sales tax.

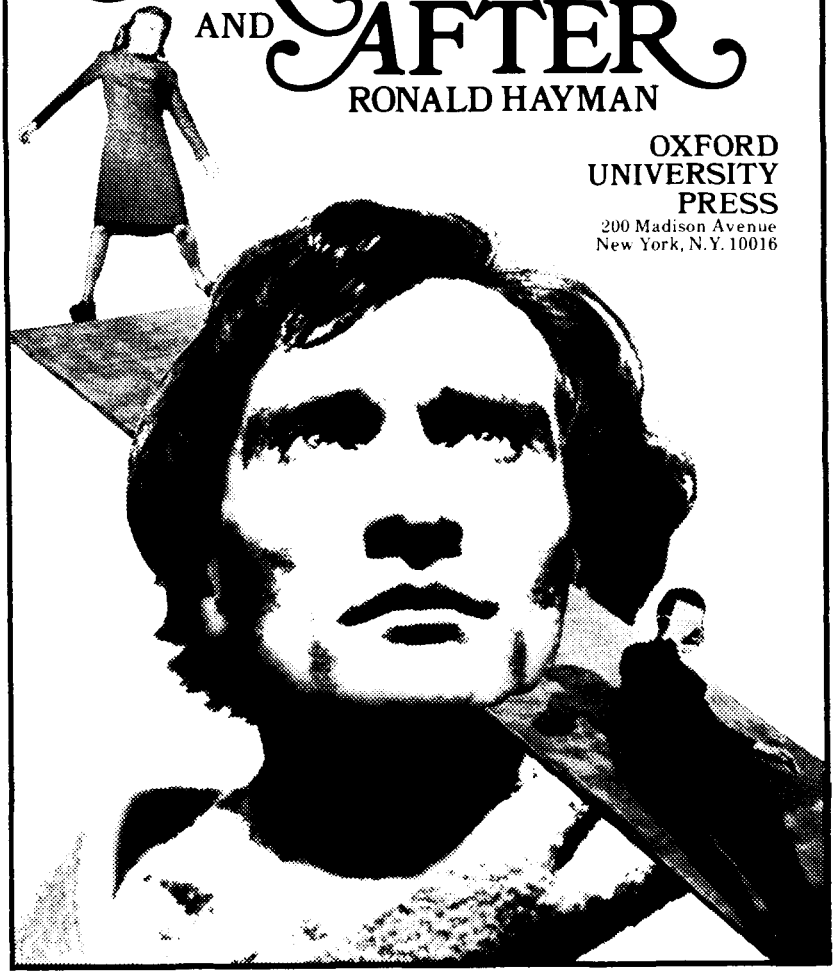
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His stage: the world.

Opium addict and madman, poet, playwright, and architect of the "theater of cruelty," Antonin Artaud has exercised perhaps the greatest single influence on the contemporary theater. In this long-awaited critical biography, Ronald Hayman examines the whole of Artaud's work against the tragedies of his life, probing the profound impact of Artaud's work upon such men as Barrault, Genet, Peter Weiss, Peter Brook, and Growtowski, while assessing Artaud's ever increasing importance on the theater today. With photographs and Artaud's own drawings and paintings. $10.95

ARTAUD AND AFTER

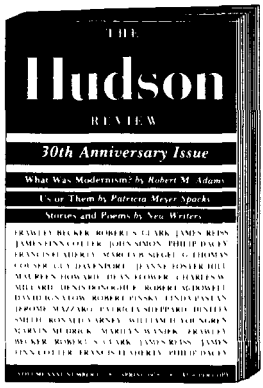
RONALD HAYMAN



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

200 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Subscribe now and receive the special book-length 30th anniversary issue

"The Hudson Review is . . . regarded as not only the best but also the last of the literary quarterlies."

—The New York Times

". . . the best case of a periodical which stretches across the arts is . . . *The Hudson Review.*"

—The Times Literary Supplement

"The Hudson Review . . . for its consistent literacy, literature, and staff critics who are neither pedants nor show-offs."

—The Village Voice

"Rare among magazines for being au fait with good literature on both sides of the Atlantic."

—The Littack Supplement

In each quarterly issue of *The Hudson Review*, you will find the best in contemporary fiction, poetry and literary criticism. You'll read the works of some of the most influential writers of our time (T. S. Eliot, Saul Bellow, Ezra Pound, Thornton Wilder, Wallace Stevens and A. R. Ammons are among past contributors) plus you will discover promising unknowns who are likely to be the greats of tomorrow. The magazine's reviews of the arts—film, music, art, theatre and dance—are among the most perceptive and candid you'll find anywhere.

Take advantage of this opportunity to receive, at no extra cost, the special 240-page 30th anniversary issue as part of your subscription. Just return the coupon below with your check.

THE HUDSON REVIEW
65 East 55th Street, New York, NY 10022

Please begin my subscription with the special book-length 30th anniversary issue:

☐ One year $10 ☐ Two years $18
☐ Three years $26
Outside U.S.A. $1 per year additional
☐ Please send me _____ copies of the 30th anniversary issue at $3.50 each.
☐ Payment enclosed $ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Paris Review

Founding Publisher	Sadruddin Aga Khan
Publisher	Bernard F. Conners
Editors	George A. Plimpton, Peter Matthiessen, Donald Hall, Robert B. Silvers, Blair Fuller, Maxine Groffsky
Managing Editor	Fayette Hickox
Poetry Editor	Michael Benedikt
Art Editor	Alexandra Anderson
Contributing Editors	Molly McKaughan, David Evanier
Paris Editor	Roger Salloch
Paris Assistant	Jenny Childs
London Editor	Ann Winchester
Business Manager	Lillian von Nickern
Associate Editors	Michael Newman, William Plummer, Cass Canfield, Carol Morgenstern, Patsy Southgate, Robert Phelps, Lucas Matthiessen, Jenny Semans, David Michaelis, Joanie Hitzig, Robert Phillips
Editorial Assistants	Rose Styron, Jill Fox, Judi Claremon, Benna Wilde, Barbara Milton, David Zinsser, Victoria Shorr, Jamie Bernstein, Dinitia Smith, Joanna Laufer, Robert Becker, Nanci Heller, Mary B. Gimbel, Doon Arbus
Advisory Editors	Nelson Aldrich, Patrick Bowles, Joan Dillon, William Pène Du Bois, Drue Heinz, John Train, Harold L. Humes, Ben Johnson, Jonathan Miller, John Phillips, Thomas H. Guinzburg, Lawrence M. Bensky, Frederick Seidel, Terry Southern, Max Steele, Philip Roth, William Styron, Eugene Walter, Christopher Cerf, Tom Clark, Ron Padgett, Maggie Paley
Consultants	Squaw Valley Community of Writers

The Paris Review is published quarterly by The Paris Review, Inc. Vol. 19, No. 72, Winter, 1977. Office: 45-39 171 Place, Flushing, New York 11358. Paris Office: Roger Salloch, 7 rue le Verrier, Paris 75006 France. London Office: Ann Winchester, 10 Pembridge Crescent, London W. 11. Distributors in the USA: Eastern News Company. Printed in USA by Capital City Press. Typeset by Wizard Graphics.

Price per copy in USA: $2.25; in France: 11F; in the UK: £1.35. Post-paid subscription for six issues $11, for twelve issues $20, for life $100. Postal surcharge of $2.00 per six issues outside USA (excluding life subscriptions). Subscription card is bound within magazine. Please give six weeks notice of change of address using subscription card.

Fiction manuscripts should be submitted to George Plimpton; poetry to Michael Benedikt c/o The Paris Review, 541 East 72nd Street, New York City 10021. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by addressed envelope and stamps or international postage coupons.

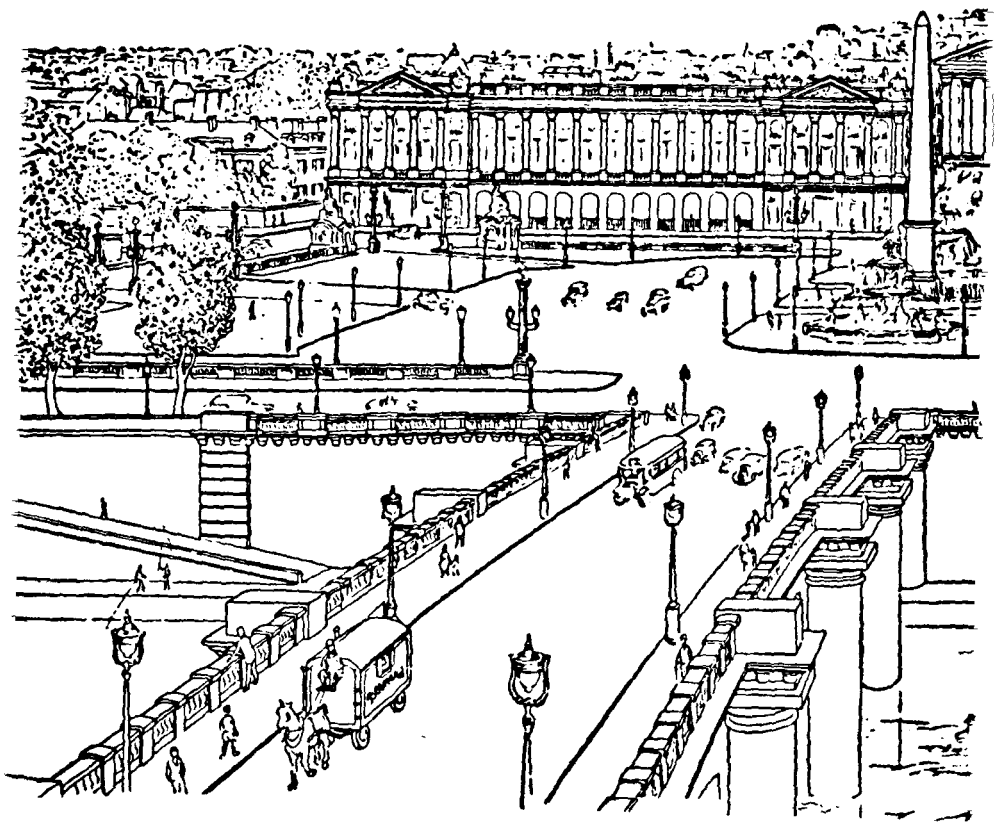
Charter member of the Association of Literary Magazines of America, CCLM and COMSEP.

Second Class postage paid at Flushing, New York, and at additional mailing offices.

© 1978 The Paris Review, Inc.

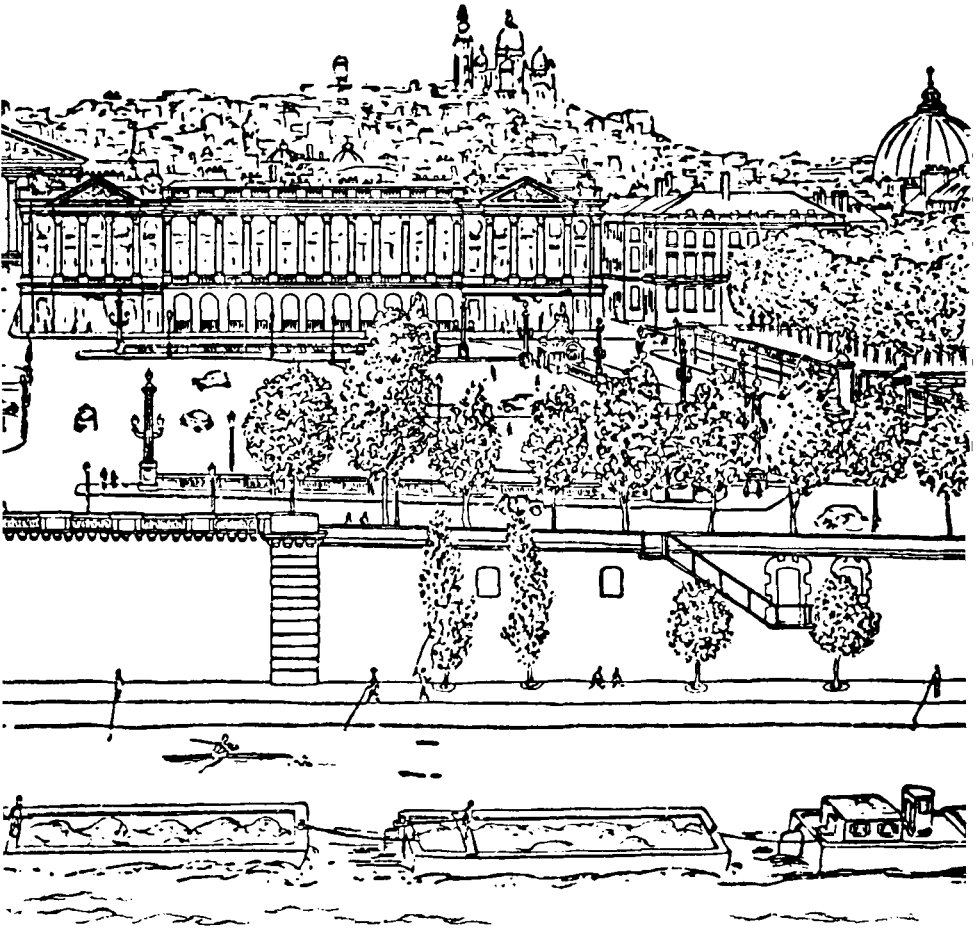
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Paris Review



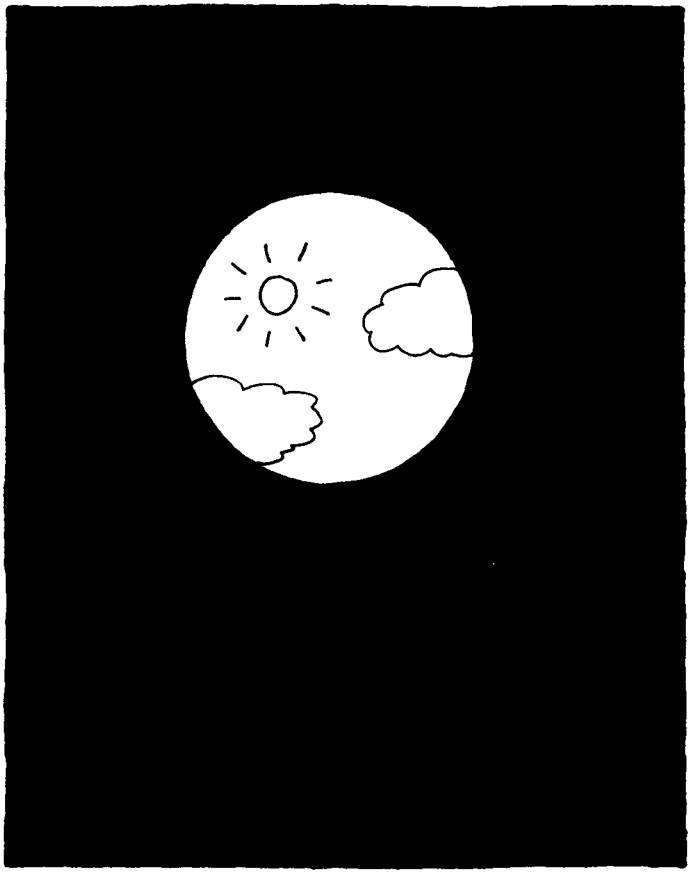
45-39 171 Place
Flushing, New York 11358

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Eastern News Co.
155 West 15th St.
New York, New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



BIRD HOUSE INTERIOR

Frontispiece by William Pène du Bois
Cover painting by Judith Ornstein, "Untitled," 1977. Oil and pencil on mylar. Courtesy of Willard Gallery.
Table of Contents Drawing by Joe Brainard, "Bird House Interior," 1976.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Interview

Richard Wilbur	*The Art of Poetry*	69

Fiction

T. Coraghessan Boyle	*The Second Swimming*	14
Stephen Minot	*Reading the News*	128
Carolyn Osborne	*Wildflowers I Have Known*	157
David Polk	*A Silent Movie*	106
Diane Vreuls	*A Town Like Kansas*	118
Joy Williams	*The Yard Boy*	57

Poetry

Susan Astor	*Two Poems*	48
Peter Carnahan	*Getting Somewhere, Benching In, Suburban Station, Philadelphia*	149
Gordon Carrega	*Uncle*	115
William Leo Coakley	*The Marriage of Dionysus and Apollo*	111
Billy Collins	*Two Poems*	147
Diana Der Hovanessian	*The Bottomless Eye*	136
Norman Dubie	*The Obituaries of the Caryatids*	44
Philip Fried	*Two Poems*	28
Gene Frumkin	*Correlating a Woman*	52
Brendan Galvin	*Tar*	144
Penelope Gilliatt	*Two Poems*	51
Paul Hall	*Approximate Poem*	150
William Harrold	*Clusters the Awaiting Years Can Handle*	31
Jim Henson	*Three Poems*	139
Michael Hogan	*The Terrace, St. Tropez*	54
T.R. Hummer	*Three Poems*	33
David Ignatow	*Eight Poems*	123
Jane Kenyon	*Two Poems*	40
Abigail Luttinger	*Two Poems*	116
Dan Masterson	*Whatever You Say, Henry*	154
John Pijewski	*Hunger*	138
Holly Prado	*Lemon Seed*	50
Ross Shideler	*What My Father Knows*	110
Naomi Shihab	*Missing the Boat*	56
Kathleen Spivack	*I Want to Tell You*	152
David Wagoner	*The Junior High School Band Concert*	42
Claire Nicolas White	*Two Poems*	37
Barry Yourgrau	*Two Bears*	113
	Notes on Contributors	175

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Second Swimming

T. Coraghessan Boyle

for Robert Coover

Mao flicks on the radio. Music fills the room, half-notes like the feet of birds. It is a martial tune, the prelude from "The Long March." Then there are quotations from Chairman Mao, read in a voice saturated with conviction, if a trifle nasal. A selection of the Chairman's poetry follows. The three constantly-read articles. And then the aphorism for the hour. Mao sits back, the gelid features imperceptibly softening from their habitual expression of abdominal anguish. He closes his eyes.

FIGHTING LEPROSY WITH REVOLUTIONARY OPTIMISM

Chang Chiu-chu of the Kunghui Commune found one day that the great toe of his left foot had become leprous. When the revisionist surgeons of the urban hospital insisted that they could not save the toe but only treat the disease and hope to contain it, Chang went to Kao Fei-fu, a revolutionary machinist of the commune. Kao Fei-fu know nothing of medicine, but recalled to Chang the Chairman's words: "IF YOU WANT KNOWLEDGE, YOU MUST TAKE PART IN THE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> PRACTICE OF CHANGING REALITY. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE TASTE OF A PEAR, YOU MUST CHANGE THE PEAR BY EATING IT YOURSELF.'' Kao then inserted needles in Chang's spinal column to a depth of 18 fen. The following day Chang Chiu-chu was able to return to the paddies. When he thanked Kao Fei-fu, Kao said: ''Don't thank me, thank Chairman Mao.''

Mao's face attempts a paternal grin, achieves Theology and listless. Out in the square he can hear the planetary hum of 500,000 voices singing ''The East Is Red.'' It is his birthday. He will have wieners with Grey Poupon mustard for breakfast.

How he grins, Hung Ping-chung, hurrying through the congested streets (bicycles, oxcarts, heads, collars, caps), a brown-paper parcel under one arm, cardboard valise under the other. In the brown-paper parcel, a pair of patched blue jeans for his young wife, Wang Ya-chin. Haggled off the legs of a Scandinavian tourist in Japan. For 90,000 yen. In the cardboard valise, Hung's underwear, team jacket, paddle. The table-tennis team has been on tour for thirteen months. Hung thirsts for Wang.

There is a smear of mustard on Mao's nose when the barber clicks through the bead curtains. The barber has shaved Mao sixteen hundred and seven times. He bows, expatiates on the dimension of the honor he feels in being of personal service to the Revolutionary Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. He then congratulates the Chairman on his birthday. ''Long live Chairman Mao!'' he shouts. ''A long, long life to him!'' Then he dabs the mustard from Mao's nose with a flick of his snowy towel.

Mao is seated in the lotus position, hands folded in his lap. Heavy of jowl, abdomen, nape. The barber strops.

''On the occasion of my birthday,'' says Mao, ''I will look more like the Buddha.'' His voice is parched, riding through octaves like the creak of a rocking chair.

''The coiffure?''

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mao nods. "Bring the side forward a hair, and take the top back another inch. And buff the pate."

Out on the Lei Feng highway a cold rain has begun to fall. Chang Chiu-chu and his pig huddle in the lee of a towering monolithic sculpture depicting Mao's emergence from the cave at Yenan. Peasants struggle by hauling carts laden with produce. Oxen bleat. A bus, the only motorized vehicle on the road, ticks up the hill in the distance. Chang's slippers are greasy with mud. He is on his way to the city to personally thank Mao for the healing of his great toe (the skin has gone from black to gray and the sensation has begun to creep back like an assault of pin-pricks) and to present the Chairman with his pig. There are six miles to go. His feet hurt. He is cold. But he remembers a phrase of the Chairman's: "I CARE NOT THAT THE WIND BLOWS AND THE WAVES BEAT: IT IS BETTER THAN IDLY STROLLING IN A COURTYARD," and he remembers also that he has a gourd of maotai (120 proof) in his sleeve. He pours a drink into his thermos-cup, mixes it with hot water and downs it. Then he lifts a handful of cold rice from his satchel and begins to chew. He pours another drink. It warms his digestive machinery like a shot of revolutionary optimism.

Hung is two blocks from home, hurrying, the collar of his pajamas fastened against the cold, too preoccupied to wonder why he and his class brothers wear slippers and pajamas on the street rather than overshoes and overcoats. He passes under a poster: fierce-eyed women in caps and fatigues hurtling toward the left, bayonets and automatic weapons in hand. It is an advertisement for a ballet: "The Detachment of Red Women." Beneath it, a slogan, the characters big as washing-machines, black on red: "GET IN THE HABIT OF NOT SPITTING ON THE GROUND AT RANDOM." The phlegm catches in his throat.

When Hung turns into his block, his mouth drops. The street has been painted red. The buildings are red, the front

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stoops are red, the railings are red, the lampposts are red, the windows are red, the pigeons are red. A monumental poster of Mao's head drapes the center of the block like an arras and clusters of smaller heads dot the buildings. Hung clutches the package to his chest, nods to old Chiung-hua where she sits on her stoop, a spot of gray on a carmine canvas, and takes the steps to his apartment two at a time.

Wang is in bed. The apartment is cold, dark. "Wang!" he shouts. "I'm back!" She does not rise to meet him, to leap into his arms in her aggressive elastic way (she a former tumbler, their romance a blossom of the People's Athletic and Revolutionary Fitness Academy). Something is wrong. "Wang!" She turns her black eyes to him and all at once he becomes aware of the impossible tumescence of the blanket spread over her. What is she concealing? She bites the corner of the blanket and groans, the labor pains coming fiercer now.

Hung is stung. Drops package and valise. Begins to count the months on his fingers. All thirteen of them. His face shrinks to the size of a pea. "Wang, what have you done?" he stammers.

Her voice is strained, unsteady: "YOU CAN'T SOLVE A PROBLEM? WELL, GET DOWN AND INVESTIGATE THE PRESENT FACTS AND ITS PAST HISTORY."

"You've been unfaithful!"

"Don't thank me," she croaks, "thank Chairman Mao."

Mao's eyes are closed. His cheeks glow, freshly-shaven. In his face, the soapy warm breath of the barber: in his ears, the snip-snip of the barber's silver scissors. His shanks and seat and the small of his back register the faint vibration of the 500,000 voices ringing in the square. A warmth, an electricity tingling through the fibers of the chair. Snip-snip.

Mao's dream is immediate and vivid. The sun breaking in the east, sweet marjoram on the breeze, crickets singing along the broad base of the Great Wall, a sound as of hidden fingers working the blades of a thousand scissors. The times are feudal. China is disunited, the Han Dynasty in decline, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Huns (Hsiung-nu) demanding tribute of gold, spices, silk, and the soft, uncallused hands of the Emperors' daughters. They wear impossible fierce mustaches stiffened with blood and mucus, these Huns, and they keep the rain from their backs with the stretched skin of murdered children. An unregenerate lot. Wallowing in the sins of revisionism and capitalist avarice. Mao, a younger man, his brow shorter, eyes clearer, jowls firmer, stands high atop the battlements supervising the placement of the final stone. The Great Wall, he calls it, thinking ahead to the Great Leap Forward and the Great Hall of the People. Fifteen hundred miles long. Forty feet high, sixteen across.

In the distance, a dust storm, a whirlwind, a thousand acres of topsoil flung into the air by the terrible thundering hoofs of the Huns' carnivorous horses. Their battlecry is an earthquake, their breath the death of a continent. On they come, savage as steel, yabbering and howling over the clattering cannonade of the horsehoofs while Mao's peasants pat the mortar in place and quick-fry wonton in eighty-gallon drums of blistering oil. Mao stands above them all, the khaki collar visible beneath the red silk robe smoothing his thighs in the breeze. In his hand, held aloft, a ping-pong paddle.

The Huns rein their steeds. They are puzzled, their babble like the disquisitions of camels and jackals. From a breezy pocket Mao produces the eggshell-frail ball, sets it atop the paddle. The grizzled Hun-chief draws closer, just beneath the rippling Chairman. "Hua?" he shouts. Mao looks down. Cups his hands to his mouth: "Volley for serve."

Chang is having problems with his legs, feet. The left is reluctant to follow the right, and when it does, the right is reluctant to follow suit. To complicate matters the leprous toe has come to life (feeling very much like a fragment of glowing iron pounded flat on an anvil), and the pig has become increasingly insistent about making a wallow of the puddled road. A finger-thick brass ring pierces the pig's (tender) septum. This ring is fastened to a cord which is in turn fastened

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to Chang's belt. From time to time Chang gives the cord a tug, gentle persuader.

Ahead the buildings of the city cut into the bleak horizon like a gap-toothed mandible. The rain raises welts in the puddles, thrushes wing overhead, a man approaches on a bicycle. Chang pauses for a nip of maotai, as a sort of internal liniment for his throbbing toe, when suddenly the pig decides to sit, flip, flounder and knead the mud of the road with its rump. The cord jerks violently. Chang hydroplanes. Drops his gourd. Comes to rest in a dark puddle abob with what appears to be spittle randomly spat. He curses the animal's revisionist mentality.

There are two framed photographs on the walls over Wang's bed. One a full-face of Mao Tse-tung, the other a profile of Liu Ping-pong, originator of table-tennis. Hung tears the Mao from the wall and tramples it underfoot. Wang sings out her birthpangs. In the street, Old Chiung-hua totters to her feet, listening. Her ancient ears, withered like dried apricots, tell her the first part of the story (the raised voice, slamming door, footsteps on the stairs), and the glassy eyes relay the rest (Hung in the crimson street, flailing at the gargantuan head of Mao suspended just above his reach like the proud stiff sail of a schooner; his use of stones, a broom, a young child; his frustration; his rabid red-mouthed dash down the length of the street and around the corner).

Chiung-hua sighs. Mao's head trembles in a gust. Wang cries out. And then the old woman hikes her skirts and begins the long painful ascent of the stairs, thinking of white towels and hot water and the slick red skulls of her own newborn sons and daughters, her spotted fingers uncertain on the banister, eyes clouding in the dark hallway, lips working over a phrase of Mao's like a litany: "WHAT WE NEED IS AN ENTHUSIASTIC BUT CALM STATE OF MIND AND INTENSE BUT ORDERLY WORK."

Mao is planted on one of the few toilet seats in China. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stall is wooden, fitted with support bars of polished bamboo. A fan rotates lazily overhead. An aide waits without. The Chairman is leaning to one side, penknife in hand, etching delicate chinese characters into the woodwork. The hot odor which rises round him tells of aging organs and grey poupon mustard. He sits back to admire his work.

IMPERIALISM IS A PAPER TIGER

But then he leans forward again, the penknife working a refinement. The aide taps at the stall door. "Yes?" says Mao. "Nothing," says the aide. Mao folds the blade back into its plastic sheath. The emendation pleases him.

IMPERIALISM SUCKS

The man lays his bicycle in the grass and reaches down a hand to help Chang from the mud. Chang begins to thank him, but the stranger holds up his hand. "Don't thank me," he says, "thank Chairman Mao." The stranger's breath steams in the chill air. He introduces himself. "Chou Te-ming," he says.

"Chang Chiu-chu."

"Chang Chiu-chu?"

Chang nods.

"Aren't you the peasant whose leukemia was cured through the application of Mao Tse-tung's thought?"

"Leprosy," says Chang, his toe smoldering like Vesuvius.

"I heard it on the radio," says Chou. "Two hundred times."

Chang beams. "See that pig?" he says. (Chou looks. The pig breaks wind.) "I'm on my way to the city to offer him up to the Chairman for his birthday. By way of thanks."

Chou, it seems, is also en route for the capital. He suggests that they travel together. Chang is delighted. Shakes the mud from his pantlegs, gives the pig's septum an admonitory tug, and then stops dead. He begins tapping his pockets.

"Lose something?" asks Chou.

"My gourd."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Ah. Maotai?"

"Home-brewed. And sweet as rain."

The two drop their heads to scan the muddied roadway. Chang spots the gourd at the same moment the pig does, but the pig is lighter on its feet. Rubber nostril, yellow tusk: it snatches up the spotted rind and jerks back its head. The golden rice liquor drools like honey from the whiskered jowls. Snurk, snurk, snurk.

Old Chiung-hua lights the lamp, sets a pot of water on the stove, rummages through Wang's things in search of clean linen. Her feet ache and she totters with each step, slow and awkward as a hard-hat diver. Wang is quiet, her breathing regular. On the floor, in the center of the room, a brown-paper parcel. The old woman bends for it, then settles into a chair beside the bed. A Japanese-made transistor radio hangs from the bedpost on a leather strap. She turns it on.

ASSISTING MORE DEAF-MUTES TO SING
'THE EAST IS RED'

It was raining, and the children of the Changchai People's Revolutionary Rehabilitation Center could not go out of doors. The paraplegic children entertained themselves by repeating quotations of Mao Tse-tung and singing revolutionary songs of the Chairman's sayings set to music. But one of the deaf-mute children came to Chou Te-ming, a cadre of a Mao Tse-tung's thought propaganda team, in tears. She signed to him that it was her fondest wish to sing "The East Is Red" and to call out "Long live Chairman Mao, a long, long life to him!" with the others. While discussing the problem with some class brothers later that day, Chou Te-ming recalled a phrase of Chairman Mao's: "THE PRINCIPLE OF USING DIFFERENT METHODS TO RESOLVE DIFFERENT CONTRADICTIONS IS ONE WHICH MARXIST-LENINISTS MUST STRICTLY OBSERVE." He was suddenly inspired to go to the children's dormitory and examine their eustachian tubes and vocal apparatuses. He saw that in many cases the deaf-mute children's tubes were blocked and frenums ingrown. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> next morning he operated. By that evening, eighteen of the twenty children were experiencing their fondest desire, singing "The East Is Red" in praise of Mao Tse-tung. This is a great victory of Mao Tse-tung's thought; a rich fruit of the great proletarian revolution.

In the shifting shadows cast by the lamp, old Chiung-hua nods and Wang wakes with a cry on her lips.

When Mao steps out on the balcony the square erupts. Five hundred thousand voices in delirium. "Mao, Mao, Mao, Mao," they chant. Confetti flies, banners wave. Mammoth Mao portraits leap at the tips of upraised fingers. The Chairman opens his arms and the answering roar is like the birth of a planet. He looks down on the wash of heads and shoulders oscillating like the sea along a rocky shoreline, and he turns to one of his aides. "Tell me," he shouts, "did the Beatles ever have it this good?" The aide, an intelligent fellow, grins. Mao gazes back down at the crowd, his frozen jowls trembling with a rush of paternal solicitude. It is then that the idea takes him, then, on the balcony, on his birthday, the grateful joyous revolutionary proletarian class brothers and sisters surging beneath him and bursting spontaneously into song ("The East Wind Prevails Over the West Wind"). He cups a hand to the aide's ear. "Fetch my swimtrunks."

Though the table-tennis team has taken him to Japan, Malaysia, Albania, Zaire, Togoland and Botswana, Hung's mental horizons are not expansive. He is a very literal-minded fellow. When Wang made her announcement from between clenched teeth and dusky sheets, he did not pause to consider that "Thank Chairman Mao" has become little more than a catchword or that virgin births have been known to occur in certain regions and epochs and under certain conditions or even that some more prosaic progenitor may have turned the trick. But perhaps he didn't want to. Perhaps the shock cauterized some vital portion of the brain, some control center, and left him no vent but a specie of mindless frothing rage. And what better object for such a rage than that ice-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

faced universal progenitor, that kindly ubiquitous father?

The pig is swimming on its feet, drunk, ears and testicles awash, eyes crossed, nostrils dripping. It has torn the cord free from Chang's pants and now trots an unsteady twenty paces ahead of Chang and Chou. Chou is walking his bicycle. Chang, rorschached in mud and none too steady of foot himself, limps along beside him. From time to time the two lengthen their stride in the hope of overtaking the pig, but the animal is both watchful and agile, and holds its liquor better than some.

They are by this time passing through the outskirts of the great city, winding through the ranks of shanties that cluster the hills like tumbled dominoes. The river, roiled and yellow, lazes on ahead of them. Chang is muttering curses under his breath. The pig's ears are flapping rhythmically. Overhead, somewhere in the thin bleak troposphere, the rain submits to a transubstantiation and begins to fall as snow. Chang flings a stone and the porker quickens its pace.

"But it's snowing—"
"Thirty degrees—"
"Your shingles—"
"Blood pressure—"
"Hemorrhoids—"

Mao waves them away, his aides, as if they were so many flies and mosquitos. His face is set. Beneath the baggy khaki swimtrunks, his thin-veined legs, splayed feet. He slips into his slippers, pulls on a Mao tunic, and steps down the stairs, out the door and into the crowd.

They are still singing. Holding hands. Posters wave, banners flash, flakes fall. By the time Mao's presence becomes known through the breadth of the crowd, he has already mounted an elevated platform in the back of a truck. The roar builds successively—from near to far—like mortar rounds in the hills, and those closest to him press in on the truck, ecstatic, frenzied, tears coursing down their cheeks,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bowing and beaming and genuflecting.

The truck's engine fires. Mao waves his cap. Thousands pass out. And then the truck begins to inch forward, the crowd parting gradually before it. Mao waves again. Mountains topple. Icebergs plunge into the sea. With the aid of an aide he climbs still higher—to the seat of a chair mounted on the platform—and raises his hands for silence. A hush falls over the crowd: cheers choke in throats, tears gel on eyelashes, squalling infants catch their breath. The clatter of the truck's engine becomes audible, and then, for those fortunate thousands packed against the fenders, Mao's voice. He is saying something about the river. Three words, repeated over and over. The crowd is puzzled. The Chairman's legs are bare. There is a towel thrown over his shoulder. And then, like the jolt of a radio dropped in bathwater, the intelligence shoots through the crowd. They take up the chant. "To the River! To the River!" The Chairman is going swimming.

Chang and Chou feel the tremor in the soles of their feet, the blast of the wind. "They're cheering in the square," says Chou. "Must be the celebration for Mao's birthday." The trousers slap around his ankles as he steps up his pace. Chang struggles to keep up, slowed by drink and toethrob, and by his rube's sense of amaze at the city. Periodically he halts to gape at the skyscrapers which rise from the bank of shanties like pyramids stalking the desert, while people course by on either side of him—peasants, workers, Red Guards, children—all rushing off to join in the rites. Ahead of him, the back of Chou, doggedly pushing at the handlebars of his bicycle, and far beyond Chou, just visible through the thicket of thighs and calves, the seductive coiled tail of the pig. "Wait!" he calls. Chou looks back over his shoulder: "Hurry!" There is another shout. And then another. The crowd is coming toward them!

Straight-backed and stiff-lipped, propped up by his aides, Mao rides the truckbed like a marble statue of himself, his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hair and shoulders gone white with a fat-flake snow. The crowd is orderly ("THE MASSES ARE THE REAL HEROES," he is thinking), flowing out of the square and into the narrow streets with the viscous ease of lightweight oil. There is no shoving or toe-stamping. Those in front of the truck fan to the sides, remove their jackets and lay them over the white peach-fuzz in the road. Then they kneel and bow their foreheads to the pavement while the black-grid tires grind over the khaki carpet. Light as milkweed, the snowflakes spin down and whiten their backs.

The sight of the river re-animates the Chairman. He lifts his arms like a conductor and the crowd rushes with hilarity and admiration. "Long live, etc!" they cheer as he strips off his jacket to reveal the skinny-strap undershirt beneath, the swell of his belly. (At this shout, Hung, who is in the process of defacing a thirty-foot high portrait of the Chairman in a tenement street three blocks away, pauses, puzzling. It is then that he becomes aware of the six teenagers in Mao shirts and red-starred caps. They march up to him in formation, silent, pure, austere and disciplined. Two of them restrain Hung's hands; the others beat him with their Mao-sticks, from scalp to sole, until his flesh takes on the color and consistency of a fermenting plum). Mao steps down from the truck, his pudgy hand spread across an aide's shoulder, and starts jauntily off for the shoreline. People weep and laugh, applaud and cheer: a million fingers reach out to touch the Chairman's bare legs and arms. As he reaches the water's edge they begin to disrobe, stripping to khaki shorts and panties and brassieres, swelling hordes of them crowding the littoral, their clothes mounting faster than the languid feathery snowflakes.

Two hundred yards up the shore Chou abandons his bike along the roadway and dashes for the water, Chang hobbling behind him, both neck-stretching to catch a glimpse of the Chairman's entourage. Somewhere behind them a band begins to play and a loudspeaker cranks out a spate of Mao's maxims. In the confusion, Chang finds himself unbuttoning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his shirt, loosing the string of his trousers, shucking the mud-caked slippers. Chou already stands poised in the gelid muck, stripped to shorts, waiting for Mao to enter the water. His mouth is a black circle, his voice lost in the boom of the crowd.

And then, miracle of miracles, Mao's ankles are submersed in the yellow current, his calves, his knees! He pauses to slap the icy water over his chest and shoulders—and then the geriatric racing dive, the breast-stroke, the square brow and circular head riding smooth over the low-lapping waves! The people go mad, Coney Island afire, and rush foaming into the chill winter water, old women, children, expectant mothers, thrilled by Mao's heroic example, charged by the passion to share in the element which washes the Revolutionary Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party.

Chou is in, Chang hesitating on the bank, the snow blowing, his arms prickled with gooseflesh. The water foams like a battle at sea. People fling themselves at the river shouting praise of Chairman Mao. Chang shrugs and follows them.

The water is a knife. Colder than the frozen heart of the universe. The current takes him, heaves him into a tangle of stiffening limbs and shocked bodies, a mass of them clinging together like worms in a can, the air splintering in his lungs, the darkness below, a thousand hands, the mud, cold. He does not catch a glimpse of the Chairman's entourage, nor does he have an opportunity to admire the clean stroke, the smooth glide of the Chairman's head over the storm-white waves, forging on.

Wang's features are dappled with sweat. Old Chiung-hua sips white tea and dabs at Wang's forehead with a handkerchief. "Push," she says. "Bear down and heave." At that moment, over the jabber of the radio and the clang of the pipes, a roar, as of numberless human voices raised in concert. Chiung-hua lifts her withered head and listens.

Suddenly the door pushes open. The old woman turns, expecting Hung. It is not Hung. It is a pig, black head, white

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shoulders, brass ring through the nose. "Shoo!" cries Chiung-hua, astonished. "Shoo!" The pig stares at her, then edges into the room apologetically. The old lady staggers angrily to her feet, but then Wang grabs her hand. Wang's teeth are gritted, her gymnast's muscles flexed. "Uh-oh," she says and Chiung-hua sits back down: a head has appeared between Wang's legs. "Push, push, push," the old woman hisses, and Wang obeys. There is a sound like a flushed toilet and then suddenly the infant is in Chiung-hua's wizened hands. She cuts the cord, dabs the blood and tissue from the puckered red face, and swaddles the tiny thing in the only clean clothes at hand: a pair of patched blue jeans.

Wang sits up and the old woman hands her the infant. She hefts it to look underneath. (A male. Heavy of jowl, abdomen, nate. And with hair on its head—the strangest growth of hair set across the most impossible expanse of brow. Square across.) Wang wrinkles her nose. "That smell," she says. "Like a barnyard."

Chiung-hua, remembering, turns to shoo the pig. But then her ancient face drops: the pig is kneeling.

Out in the street, so close it jars, a shout goes up.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poems by Philip Fried

More Things, Horatio!

Dream, philosophy, of the little
Hudson Valley town of Cold
Spring (there's an unexpected place)
Where I spent one boyhood summer running
Wild and riding a horse around
A circle but I didn't know
That the incarnation of Ralph Waldo
Emerson was teaching in the high
School all the while, in the form
Of a bearded man who rhapsodized
To his students about radio waves.
River breezes whipped the pennons
Along the top of the school and
The river was a sentient being.
After I left and the place left all
But my deepest mind, the level where
My blonde hair still hasn't faded into
Brown, there was a local baby boom
Like an extrabig volley from West Point
And the town built more and more schools
(That now are empty) and a girl named Ruth
Was shot into the mid nineteen fifties
As if from a circus cannon, hating
Her name, but reconciled later,
And she became a clarinetist
In the high school band, knees furiously
Pumping while atop her hat
She wore a great white plume. Dream,
Philosophy, of that! And she
Knew how to blow bubbles and chewing
Aggressively crack the wad of gum
Against her molars. She didn't spit

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Or master refinements of spitting through
The teeth because that was for boys. Oh
The crispness of some things, beyond
Philosophy's dreams!

Seeing He Was a Museum

In his right hand extended, palm
Upward, he carried a few little faience
Sculptures—hawk, frog, and squatting man.
He wore a gambler's shade above
His eyes and thought it was an awning
Because he was an institution
Rather than a person. He sought
Donations from the Rockefellers
But his carefully worded letters of
Appeal always got filed away.
Undaunted, he petitioned the mayor
For recognition, a blue-ribbon
Ceremony to open him,
And he wanted the council to pass a law
Giving him the absolute right
To commandeer a taxi at any
Time, seeing he was a museum and might
Have to make lightning acquisitions.
He wanted to get to know as many
Men as possible, to travel
Always in a crowd of admirers.
He would have liked the papers to publish
A route of his daily walks so people
Could schedule their visits to him & he wished
To confer with other museums on an equal
Basis, for sometimes, he admitted,
Not everything can be accomplished
With people only, nice as they are.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Also, he wanted to know how the Tate
In London and the Hermitage
In Leningrad were feeling, possibly
Telegrams would serve to extend
Fraternal greetings. And when he decided
To make his Grand Tour, they would be ready
To receive him. Was there room in museums
Especially set aside for other
Museums when they visited? Like Chinese
Boxes nesting inside each other.
What about China, had they abolished
Museums? But mostly he wanted to sense
The crowds streaming out of himself,
Satisfied at closing time.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

William Harrold

Clusters The Awaiting Years Can Handle

Leona heard the engines again, the great
cranes outside her window breaking up the old history,
the bulldozers striking layers of rock that ran
beneath her house, shaking the pictures on the walls.
The great machines had rolled down the road at dawn,
slow sure creatures landing from the future
on ribbed rubber feet, beginning to break Leona's life
into clusters the awaiting years could handle.

Through the window she could see the house of her
neighbors
with its flying gable, its blue roof still damp with dew.
In her childhood, Leona had watched the Beasleys through
the small end of her telescope. Though a toy
it made them seem so tiny in their little house,
Mr. Beasley in his carpenter shirt sludging through the den
like a thermos bottle without its cork,
his liquored-up breath escaping. Mrs. Beasley like a coffee
pot
somewhat delicate but nothing sterling, balancing on her
three legs
when she bent over the table setting places for the family
who would gather there on Sundays.

As a little girl, Leona had fantasies of the Beasleys making
love.
Somehow it never happened on the bed, the Beasleys on their
large
mohair sofa in their flowery papered living room,
sprawled where a few stars could dance on their backs,
Sam the thermos shape, half corked, and Dorothea with her
three legs in the air.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All these years in that starlight, Sam becoming lined with
glass,
Dorothea in that house with its roof of blue dew
changing slowly into sterling, and both their little girls
only faces now at the window, jarred up from the jaws
of diphtheria by the workman's pneumatic drill,
little Gilda and little Gloria, once Leona's playmates,
vibrating like hummingbirds at the glass, their beaks dry
from the life in a land with no nectar.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Three Poems by T.R. Hummer

A Space Warp Appears, Right In The Middle Of The Parlor Floor

Based on a copper enamel
by Skip Allen

Perhaps there was a rug
There once, a hooked one
Originally owned by someone
Else's aunt. If so, it has been
Transported, and is floating light-
Years away—for now, if you looked,
You would only see a distant
Galaxy or two, whirling in the middle
Of a smallish oval void, just
There, where the cat was accustomed
To curl on winter nights.

By luck, there is no one at home.
They had just gone out when it came—
And a good thing, too. Who knows
what might have gone on
If the children had been around?
But matters are perfectly
Safe as they stand just now.
Only an old straight chair is anywhere
Near it—not too great a loss
Should the thing get bigger suddenly
And let more stars burn through.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That is enough for a life to do. But a poem
Is so much less—a poem is even smaller
Than a fraction of a breath, than a momentary gleam
Of sunlight on water, than a leaf that falls deep
In a forest, at night, when no one is there to see.
In fact, these words I offer you now are so miniscule
That, unless you are scanning the air around you every
moment
With the most sensitive instruments, you will never know
What they are. They will shoot right by you, penetrate the
earth
Like cosmic rays, and vanish toward a star.
But whether you know it or not, they are passing through
Your bones this very instant—they are striking the marrow
Where your clear red blood bubbles up like water from a
spring—
They are bursting into your groin, they are altering the faces
Of your unborn children, changing the color of their hair—
But that is no miracle. Everything does that.
Every heart that beats, every eye that flickers open
Anywhere, illuminates us all like X-rays, leaving
Photographs of our insides glittering in the twilight.

If that is so, perhaps, now that I am leaving—
Fading into the distance like a moment, like a season—
Perhaps it is not too much to want to leave behind
Some image of myself, some faint afterglow.
Perhaps it is not too much if, like everything that passes,
I want to think that my footprints are fossilized somewhere.
But the weight of my life is so tiny, its feet so nebulous,
That I cannot expect the earth to yield beneath it.
And so, friends, I turn to you, hoping you will take
The shape of my breath and make a memory of it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So listen: A life is insignificant, a life
Is almost nothing—almost, but not quite.
A life is not so small that it would not be a burden to you:
A thorn in the heel of your hand, a stone in your shoe.
Therefore, I do not give you my life. Instead, I give you
This poem, I give you these words that spring
Uncontrollably out of me, a fatal radiation that makes
You click like Geiger counters, and yet weighs nothing
at all—

An invisible presence that does not respect time or space,
A faint light that you can only see when your eyes are closed.
I give you these words that have no size,
These words that you do not have to hear
To be marked by them forever with the sound of my
heartbeat.
It will be so easy for you, friends—it will be
Painless, no trouble at all. You will not even have
To know I am speaking to you unless you take your lenses out
And scrutinize your skin to find out what I have said.

That is why poems exist. And that is why
Out of all the things I might have told you
I have chosen to say only this.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Genesis of Hands

They are not, as you might suppose, modelled on maple
leaves
Or starfish or certain five-pointed flowers. There is nothing
Like them anywhere in nature. They have no precedent.

It is as though they burst into being whole, bypassing
The usual channels of existence, sprung from the realm
Of some far-seeing god who suddenly said,
Here is a straw for a drowning man: Grasp this.

Farewell Poem

On leaving, for the first
time in my life—

For everyone who will still be
here when I am gone

The story of my life would not be very much—
A grain of wheat, perhaps, a spider's egg, a small stone—
But such as it is, I have wanted it to be
Part of everything: tiny, but indispensable.
I have wanted it to gleam in the morning light
Like a snail's track on the doorstep.
I have wanted it to hit you suddenly
Like a burst of spring rain, and be gone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poems by Clair Nicolas White

The Legend Of St. Ursula

Peekèd, they peer into the future.
They have unsteady bottoms to their ships,
eleven thousand sea-sick virgins
with devils sitting on their hats.

I saw three ships go sailing by
in many tales of many lands.
Does Ursula the captain know
where she shall land her fragile crew?
It's safer to keep sailing on
than to be owned by pagan men,
though devils twitter, "Oh steady ground
where the green gardens grow!"

Ursula claims a heavenly spouse
called Christ. Freya before her sailed
through the skies, wild as the moon,
trailed by stars, in search of a man.
Or was it this same ship which took
wings in a sea turned upside down?
In which case, the dizzying heights
would add to the discomfort.

Why not set foot in Brittany
Where English soldiers pine for wives?
Merciless is Ursula. Keep to the high seas!
I saw three ships go sailing by. . . .
The wind blew to Batavia,
They wandered up the Rhine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This was all prehistory.
Their bones were found outside Cologne
and holy nuns had visions which
explain this naval mystery
Though wary church authorities
are not so very sure.

The day these virgins stepped ashore
they suffered Holy Massacre.
A church was built to Ursula
who knew the dangers which befall
girls that are too available
when their feet touch the ground.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To Sylvia Rediscovered

Two middle-aged sisters on one continent,
two peas in a pod or seeds in a womb,
our skin comes from the same bolt.
What heart-ache caused you to have removed
my favorite mole on your chin?

Now you buy rather expensive
black one-piece underwear.
When we smile the gold fillings show,
put in our teeth in '42
by Doctor Pos, whose belly pressed
against the dentist chair.

I explore your suit-case like a biography.
Shall we exchange children and face cream?
The skin curtains of our eyelids droop
and our chins tend to repeat themselves
but these scars have a certain flair.

Your eyes, the color of cloves,
have the ageless glint of a dinosaur's
and even if we were dogs, or fish,
don't you think we'd know we were sisters?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poems by Jane Kenyon

At the Feeder

First the Chickadees take
their share, then fly
to the bittersweet vine,
where they crack open the seeds,
excited, like poets
opening the day's mail.

And the Evening Grosbeaks—
those large and prosperous
finches—resemble skiers
with the latest equipment, bright
yellow goggles on their faces.

Now the Bluejay comes in
for a landing, like a SAC bomber
after a day of patrolling the ozone,
Every teacup in the pantry rattles.

The solid and graceful bodies
of Nuthatches, perpetually
upside down, like yogis,
the Slate-Colored Juncoes, feeding
on the ground, taking only
what falls to them.

The cats watch, one
from the lid of the breadbox,
another from the piano. A third
flexes its claws in sleep, dreaming
perhaps, of a chicken neck
or of being worshiped as a god
at Bubastis, during the XXIII dynasty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Clothes Pin

How much better it is
to carry wood to the fire
than to moan about your life.
How much better
to throw the garbage
onto the compost, or to pin the clean
sheet on the line
with a gray-brown wooden clothes pin!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

David Wagoner

The Junior High School Band Concert

When our semi-conductor
Raised his baton, we sat there
Gaping at *Marche Militaire,*
Our mouth-opening number.
It seemed faintly familiar
(We'd rehearsed it all that winter),
But we attacked in such a blur,
No army anywhere
On its stomach or all fours
Could have squeezed through our crossfire.

I played cornet, seventh chair
Out of seven, my embouchure
A glorified Bronx cheer
Through that three-keyed keyhole-stopper
And neighborhood window-slammer
Where mildew fought for air
At every exhausted corner,
My fingering still unsure
After scaling it for a year
Except on the spit-valve lever.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Each straight-faced mother and father
Retested his moral fibre
Against our traps and slurs
And the inadvertent whickers
paradiddled by our snares,
And when the brass bulled forth
A blare fit to horn over
Jericho two bars sooner
Than Joshua's harsh measures,
They still had the nerve to stare.

By the last lost chord, our director
Looked older and soberer.
No doubt, in his mind's ear
Some band somewhere
In some Music of some Sphere
Was striking a note as pure
As the wishes of Franz Schubert,
But meanwhile here we were:
A lesson in everything minor,
Decomposing our first composer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Norman Dubie

The Obituaries of Caryatids

After two stories by Bernard Kaplan

Edgar Pesach, the obituary writer, is on the roof of the
Lincoln Plaza
Apartments. It is a deep autumn Sukkoth night.
The Philharmonic plays tonight—Boccherini, or Brahms?
Outside the ticket-box five women in draping, 16th Century,
masculine
Furs stand and talk. They are in shadows, and their furs make
Their sholders larger than life, at least, for the moment.
Edgar Pesach

Desires only his naked caryatids: Annie Wein, Edie Hawkes
and Flo Avery
But these dead girls he has already written about! But they
are the
Cornerstones of his best work. They are the energy
Of eternal circumstances, even if they do spindle and stink
In their boxes, in that shared vault, surrounded by copper
beech trees
Out by Long Island Sound. . .

Edgar Pesach studies the fountain down below him, he
watches the crowd
Squeeze two by two into the Philharmonic Hall; Edgar's vigil
Is simple: he waits on the roof for Society's lion
To fall to the cold sidewalk, bleeding from the nose and
mouth—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The open handkerchief beside the corpse, the widow howling.
It is now that Edgar puts down his opera glasses, and streaks
downstairs
Across the street to where the body is being encircled with
strangers.
He interviews the widow, the chauffeur, the sister and the
orderly
Who climbs back into the ambulance saying, "Pesach, it's a
basket case."

Pesach's obituaries sometimes make the front page!
Sometimes
His subject dies inside the Hall, in the middle of the
program, and
A faithful usher comes to the glass doors and waves a red cloth
To Edgar on the roof and Edgar scrambles over to the Phil-
harmonic, incognito
With a doctor's black bag: he interviews the family, and gazes
Into the mouth of the corpse, a Bach partita seems to have
sedated
The widow and her obese son . . .

Edgar celebrates each and every Jewish holiday in his small
apartment
Above a hat-blocking shop. He has made a deep blue dreidel
Out of candle wax, and he preserves it in his icebox. All his
money
Goes to the maintenance of the vault that encloses his sweet
caryatids,
And he visits them each week-end.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He saw them, in life, but once. He was out along the water,
the occasion
For this vigil was an International yachting event. Edgar, with
binoculars,
Was on the beach waiting for the first yachts to appear around
The point, but, waiting, he spotted three schoolgirls out
On the water in a rowboat. All three girls were tall.
They stood in the boat and carefully undressed, touching each
Other when losing their balance. Naked, they slipped into
the water.
Edgar heard their laughter. He thought he loved them equally
From that moment on, but soon they would be tragically
distant

From him—

the first yacht rounded the point,
The Goth is what was written on its bow. A young man
On the yacht began pointing to the three girls, the girls
Panicked and trying to climb back into their rowboat, they
Cut and scratched themselves, and swamped the boat.
The young man on the yacht rubbed his hand over the bulge
Of his leopard-skin swimsuit. The caryatids, the three young
Girls, thrashed in the water. They drowned after five minutes
Of screaming at the sleek, convex lines of the passing yachts.

Pesach's copy-editor at the office buried Edgar's account
Of the unforgettable drownings.
And Edgar began his vigils at the Philharmonic. . .

It is his accounting for the lost caryatids, Annie Wein who had
Black ribbons on her pig-tails, Edie Hawkes who
Was to marry a rabbi and Flo Avery who was blonde, who's
Nipples seemed so pink to Pesach that Saturday afternoon
Along the water. . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The ambulance speeds off, the widow is fainting into the arms
Of two ushers, and Edgar Pesach crosses the street to
The fountain . . . he thinks for a moment and then, not
hesitating,
Steps into the trough; he sits under the clear umbrella

Of falling water, this is his Sukkoth hut in which he imagines
Himself fondling the fruits and vegetables of the harvest:
the yellow
Horn of squash, round melons and the black bonnet-acorns.
The three curbstones on the fountain trough, the three
caryatids
With a Rodin softness; and Edgar Pesach looks through the
crystal-
Clear water to a bum who is looking in at him:

Edgar picks a half-dollar off the floor of the fountain and sails
It out onto the cement. The bum picks it up, polishes it
On his coat sleeve, studies the young face that is engraved
On the coin, and says to Pesach, in a low elegaic voice:

It's that rich young bastard, Marcus Aurelius! What we hear
next
Is either the laughter of Pesach. Or the falling, circulating

Waters of a new patriarch, his three stone sisters,
And their mothers who remember the breaking glass like
laughter
That long night of the pogroms of *Kristal Nact* . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poems by Susan Astor

Demons

for Isaac Bashevis Singer

Each morning as I clean myself
I find their leavings in my crevices:
Ochre crusts, flakes dry as cellophane,
Suspect mouse-colored lint.

Despicable tricksters!
God only knows how they get in.
There have been times
I sensed them entering—
Strange prickles on the scalp,
Inexplicable itches in the groin,
Always the terrible certainty
I was too big to defend myself.

The mutterings between my ears,
The rumblings along my bowel pipes—
I ignore like gossip.
But when I least expect it, I find that
They are stirring cornstarch through my blood,
Mortaring the hinges of my knee.

At night they work in shifts.
While some are sleeping
Others are still busy at my underpinnings:
Rooting out my few remaining hairs,
Loosening the sockets of my teeth.

Infernal mischief makers! Vandals!
Even now I feel them
Fidgeting behind my eyes,
Peering out the shutters,
Fogging my windows
With their small foul breaths.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Grandpa P.

Sad always, always sad
At Passover, at picnics, at the zoo
Sad as you soaped me in the bath
And as you fidgeted with watches
You no longer fixed.
I could not bring myself
To bring you things
As you paced your bread line
In the corner of the dining room
And eyed the roast beef with despair.
The dog depressed you
Was always taken to the bedroom
Where you did not have to see her lick or wag.
When I was five you hung yourself away,
A fob of rope around your neck,
Your face stopped in the thirties.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Holly Prado

Lemon Seed

impossible to pick it up. the oily outer coating catches on the kitchen
counter and begs to grow, even where there's no soil. the ones I did
manage to plant lived for three years—never trees, but the flat leaves
could be rubbed for odor and pleasure. there are ways to live that have
nothing to do with righteousness, only with the urge to persist. I have
no imagination these days, though I see what's close by to look at: the
palm in my living room is beginning to scatter its spores. I sweep them
up. they escape to farther corners than I can reach. it occurs to me
that the first step in loving someone else is to love something slippery.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poems by Penelope Gilliatt

Dead Heat

For years the thought of you scorched my eyeballs
Now all is well under the scalding sun.

Gossip

The world in its caprice
Will deign to say it knows us both
But it knows nothing
And does not even know that it knows nothing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gene Frumkin

Correlating A Woman

1. I perceived myself falling in love
in bits and pieces in black and white.
On page 20 she wore a floral robe
loosely closed, her right arm extended over
her abdomen, her hand veined, stark,
in light shadow, a downward arc.

2. On page 21 this robe was slightly parted
to show the arcs of her breasts,
the space between them. A ridge of shade
covered the right arc, perhaps fostering
an illusion: that it was higher than the left.
The right hand was perpendicular
to the torso and held the left,
fingers loosely intertwined. The fourth finger
of the right hand wore a dark-stoned
oval ring. A segment of ring could also
be glimpsed on the other fourth finger.
Below the hands, which concealed the navel,
the woman's belly was bare
but a white edge cut off her body there.

3. Page 49, a woman's back, naked,
high arc of left hip, the right curved
in shadow. Her arms ended at the elbows.
A breast, or perhaps its shadow,
protruded to the left between elbow and torso.
Her buttocks ended at the beginning
of their cleft, shaded to the left.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

4. Page 64 provided the most extensive section,
from bosom to knees, naked. The right breast,
because of the angle, appeared to arc
lower than the left, right nipple extended,
left not visible. The navel much nearer
the bust than the pubis, possibly indicating
large, full breasts, sloping low. Certainly
a long expanse of belly, slight
in its mound. The pubic hair was dark
and dense, ending at the top in a straight edge,
probably shaved thus. If so, I wondered how tall
this hair might grow. The left thigh,
full and heavily shadowed, was forward,
preventing a view of the complete pubic arc.
Her left hand was braced lightly on the hip.
Yes, a ring on the fourth finger,
this one also an oval shape.

5. On page 87 was half the woman's face
or, at least, I assume this was
the same woman, since both hands, fisted,
thumbs extended, covered the mouth
and on each hand was an oval ring.
Eyes large, dark arcs. Anquished expression.
She wore a black top. High forehead,
hair long down each side. She was
clearly modeled for her sensuous fashion.

6. Page 97 was the last meeting. Again
a facial view, hair wrapped in a towel.
Eyesockets wide, almost hidden in shadow.
Nose long and full, lips heavy. Her fingers
branched widely across each side
of her face, a stylized Hindu goddess.
Her sexual arc remained, as before, hidden by design,
once more the oval rings quite plain.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Michael Hogan

The Terrace, St. Tropez

A girl reclining by an open window
I do not say this was
the only thing one saw that day.
There was a strip of luminous green,
pale and cool suggesting the sea,
or moss on wooden shutters.
But if on a white canvas I mark down
some sensation of blue or green,
each stroke diminishes the one preceding.
So you see there was, first of all, a girl.
I, bored and elegant, outside the scene
at a proper aesthetic distance.
She, Algerian, darker than almonds,
almost part of the terrace shadows.

I do not recall the season.
It may have been that autumn was soft and new,
or that it was indeed still summer.
Ten years ago I would have said
August, and let it go,
a soft brush stroke to suggest fullness.
But now I am hardly certain where the sea ends
or the sky begins.
Only my signature seems exact:*Henri*
just below the flagstones on the terrace walk.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She said to me (the day in fact
the canvas was complete),
Henri, she said, *everything is melting and imprecise.*
And you have chosen to paint me,
your woman, without character.

Months later I was telling my friends:
Algerians have no humor.
But now the trespass of the years
demands consideration.
Could one undo a painting or a memory
he could say simply: *There was a girl*
reclining by an open window.

But instead I will do a landscape, my last,
in which each of the leaves will be a girl
reclining: inexact, characterless.
Each will represent a painting which commenced
quite simply, until line followed line and color
color, filling the canvas,
and something (one could say purity)
was lost in the process.
A single leaf fallen shall be taken to mean
this same Algerian girl
who died, I'm told, one year in August
of nothing very fatal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Naomi Shihab

Missing The Boat

It is not so much that the boat passed
and you failed to notice it.
It is more like the boat stopped
directly outside your bedroom window,
the captain blowing the signal-horn,
the band playing a rousing march.

The boat shouted, waving bright flags,
its silver hull blinding in the sunlight.

But you had this idea you were going by train.
You kept checking the time-table,
digging for tracks.
And the boat got tired of you,
so tired it pulled up the anchor
and raised the ramp.

The boat bobbed into the distance,
shrinking like a toy—
at which point you probably realized
you had always loved the sea.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Yard Boy

Joy Williams

The yard boy was a spiritual materialist. He lived in the Now. He was free from the karmic chain. Being enlightened wasn't easy. It was very hard work. It was manual labor actually.

The enlightened being is free. He feels the sorrows and sadness of those around him but does not necessarily feel his own. The yard boy felt that he had been enlightened for about two months, at the most.

The yard boy had two possessions. One was a pick-up truck. The other was a plover he had stuffed and mounted when he thought he wanted to be an ornithologist, in the days before he had become a spiritual materialist. The bird was in the room he rented. The only other thing in the room was a bed. The landlady provided sheets and towels. Sometimes when he came back from work hot and sweaty with little bits of leaves and stuff caught in his hair, the landlady would give him a piece of key lime pie on a blue plate.

The yard boy was content. He had hard muscular arms and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a tanned back. He had compassion. He had a girl friend. When he thought about it, he supposed that having a girl friend was a cop-out to the security which he had eschewed. This was a preconception however and a preconception was the worse form of all the forms of security. The yard boy believed he was in balance on this point. He tried to see things the way they were from the midst of nowhere, and he felt that he had worked out this difficulty about the girl friend satisfactorily. The important thing was to be able to see through the veils of preconception.

The yard boy was a handsome fellow. He seldom spoke. He was appealing. Once he had run over an old lady and had broken her leg, but no one had gotten mad at him about it. Now that he was a yard boy his hands smelled of 6-6-6. His jeans smelled of tangelos. He was honest and truthful, a straightforward person who did not distinguish between this and that. For the girl friend he always had a terrific silky business which was always at the ready.

The yard boy worked for several very wealthy people. In the morning of every day he got into his pick-up and drove over the causeways to the Keys where he mowed and clipped and cut and hauled. He talked to the plants. He always told them what he was going to do before he did it so that they would have a chance to perpare themselves. Plants have lived in the Now for a long time but they still have to have some things explained to them.

At the Wilson's house the yard boy clips a sucker from an orange tree. It is February. Even so, the orange tree doesn't like it much. Mrs. Wilson comes out and watches the yard boy while he works. She has her son with her. He is about three. He doesn't talk yet. His name is Tao. Mrs. Wilson is wealthy and can afford to be wacky. What was she supposed to do after all, she asked the yard boy once, call her kid George? Bruce? For godssakes.

Her obstetrician had told her at the time that he had never seen a more perfectly shaped head.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Wilsons' surroundings are splendid. Mrs. Wilson has splendid clothes, a splendid figure. She has a wonderful Cuban cook. The house is worth three-quarters of a million dollars. The plantings are worth a hundred thousand dollars. Everything has a price. It is fantastic. A precise worth has been ascribed to everything. Every worm and aphid can be counted upon. It costs a certain amount of money to eradicate them. The sod is laid down fresh every year. For weeks after the lawn is installed, the seams are visible and then the squares of grass gather together and it becomes, everywhere, in sun or shade, a smooth, witty and improbable green like the color of a parrot.

Mrs. Wilson follows the yard boy around as he tends to the hibiscus, the bougainvillea, the jacaranda, the horse cassia, the Java flower, the flame vine. They stand beneath the mango, looking up.

"Isn't it pagan," Mrs. Wilson says.

Close the mouth, shut the doors, untie the tangles, soften the light, the yard boy thinks.

Mrs. Wilson says, "It's a waste this place, don't you think? I've never understood nature, all this effort. All this will. . ." She flaps her slender arms at the reeking of odors, the rioting colors. Still, she looks up at the mangos, hanging. Uuuuuh, she thinks.

Tao is standing between the yard boy and Mrs. Wilson with an oleander flower in his mouth. It is pink. Tao's hair is golden. His eyes are blue.

The yard boy removes the flower from the little boy's mouth. "Toxic," the yard boy says.

"What is it!" Mrs. Wilson cries.

"Oleander," the yard boy says.

"Cut it down, dig it out, get rid of it," Mrs. Wilson cries. "My precious child!" She imagines Tao being kidnapped, held for an astronomical ransom by men with acne.

Mrs. Wilson goes into the house and makes herself a drink. The yard boy walks over to the oleander. The oleander shakes a little in the breeze. The yard boy stands in front of it for a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

few minutes, his clippers by his side.

Mrs. Wilson watches him from the house. She swallows her drink and rubs the glass over her hot nipples. The ice clinks. The yard boy raises the clippers and spreads them wide. The bolt connecting the two shears breaks. The yard boy walks over to the house, over to where Mrs. Wilson stands behind glass doors. The house weighs a ton with the glass. The house's architect was the South's most important architect, Mrs. Wilson once told the yard boy. Everything he made was designed to give a sense of freedom and space. Everything was designed to give the occupants the impression of being outside. His object was to break down definitions, the consciousness of boundaries. Mrs. Wilson told the yard boy the architect was an asshole.

Behind the glass, Mrs. Wilson understands the difficulty. Behind Mrs. Wilson's teeth is a tongue that tastes of bourbon.

"I'll drive you downtown and we can get a new whatever," she says. She is determined.

She and he and Tao get into Mrs. Wilson's Mercedes 350 SL. Mrs. Wilson is a splendid driver. She has taken the Mercedes up to 130, she tells the yard boy. It is 130 that the engine is capable of, nothing more. The engine stroked beautifully at 130, no sound of strain at all.

She drives past the beaches, over the causeways. She darts in and out of traffic with a fine sense of timing. Behind them, occasionally, old men in Gremlins jump the curb in fright. Mrs. Wilson glances at them in the rear-view mirror seeming neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. She puts her hand on the yard boy's knee. She rubs his leg.

Tao scrambles from the back into the front seat. He gets on the other side of the yard boy. He bites him.

I am living in a spiritual junkyard, thinks the yard boy. I must make it into a simple room with one beautiful object.

Sweat runs down the yard boy's spine. Tao is gobbling at his arm as though it is junket.

"What is going on!" yells Mrs. Wilson. She turns the Mercedes around in the middle of the highway. A Good Humour

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

truck scatters a tinkle of music and a carton of Fudgesicles as it grinds to a stop. Mrs. Wilson is cuffing Tao as she speeds back home. She is embarrassed at his rudeness. Her shaven armpit rises and falls before the yard boy's eyes.

"Save the oleander!" she yells at both of them. "What do I care!"

In the driveway she runs around to Tao's side of the car and pinches the child's nose. He opens his mouth. She grabs him by the hair and carries him suspended into the house.

The yard boy walks to his truck, gets in and drives off. The world is neither nest nor playground, the yard boy thinks.

The yard boy lies in his room thinking about his girl friend.

Open up, give in, allow some space, sprinkle and pour, he thinks.

Outside, the garbage men are picking up the trash. They whistle and bang the cans about. The trash from the house where the yard boy lives contains the discards of the righteous. Tea bags, lime rinds, Charmin tubes, wilted flowers. The garbage men whoop to the truck that carries them off as though it were a horse. Sometimes the yard boy has bad dreams in this room. Sometimes he dreams of demons with eyes as big as saucepans and bodies the size of thumbs. But mostly he has good thoughts about his girl friend. He believes that her mind has the same energy, speed and pattern of his mind even though she isn't a spiritual materialist.

The yard boy is mowing the grass around Johnny Dakota's swimming pool. Dakota is into heroin and intangible property. As he is working, the yard boy hears a big splash behind him. He looks into the swimming pool and sees a rock on the bottom of it. He finishes mowing the grass and then he gets a net and fishes the rock out. It is as big as his hand. It is grey with bubbly streaks of iron and metal running through it. The yard boy thinks it is a meteorite. It would probably still be smouldering with heat had it not landed in the swimming pool.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is interesting but not all that interesting. The possibility of it surviving the earth's atmosphere is one-tenth of one percent. Other things are more interesting than this. Nevertheless, the yard boy shows it to Johnny Dakota. Johnny Dakota might want to place it in a taped-up box in his house to prevent the air from corroding it.

Johnny Dakota looks up at the sky, then at the piece of space junk and then at the yard boy. He is a sleek, fit man. Only his eyes and his hands look old. His hands have deep ridges in them and smashed nails. He once told the yard boy that his mother, whom he loved, had died from plucking a wild hair from her nose while vacationing in Calabria. His father had choked on a bread stick in a Chicago restaurant. Life is ruthless, he had told the yard boy. The darkness is always near.

Johnny Dakota usually takes his swim at this time of the morning. He is wearing his swim trunks and flip-flops. If he had been in the pool he could have been brained. Once his mother had dreamed of loosing a tooth and two days later her cousin dropped dead.

Johnny Dakota is angry. Anyone could tell. His face is dark. His mouth is a thin line. He gives the yard boy two twenties and tells him to bury the rock in the back yard. He tells him not to mention this to anyone.

The yard boy takes the rock and buries it beneath a fiddle-leaf fig at the north end of the house. The fig tree is distressed. It's magnetic, that's the only thing known about this rock. The fig tree is almost as upset as Johnny Dakota.

The yard boy lies in his room. His girl friend is giving him a hard time. She used to visit him in his room several nights a week but now she doesn't. He will take her out to dinner. He will spend two twenties on a fantastic dinner.

The yard boy is disgusted with himself. The spider's web is woven in the wanting, he thinks. He has desire for his girl friend. His mind is shuttling between thoughts of the future and thoughts of the past. He is dissatisfied. He is out of touch

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the sharp simplicity and wonderfulness of the moment. He looks around him. He opens his eyes wide. The yard boy's jeans are filthy. A green insect crawls in and out of the scapular feathers of the plover.

The yard boy goes downstairs. He gives the plover to his landlady. She seems delighted. She put it on a shelf in the pantry, just above the pie plates. The landlady has white hair, a wen, and old legs that end in sneakers. She wants the yard boy to look at a plant she has just bought. It is in a big green plastic pot in the sunshine of her kitchen. Nothing is more obvious than the hidden, the yard boy thinks.

"This plant is insane," the yard boy says.

The landlady is shocked. She backs off a little from the plant which is a rabbit's foot fern.

"It has seen something terrible," the yard boy says.

"I bought it on sale," the landlady says. "At that place where I always go."

The yard boy shakes his head. The plant waves a wrinkly leaf and drops it.

"Insane?" the landlady asks. She would like to cry. She has no family, no one.

"Mad as a hatter," the yard boy says.

The restaurant that the yard boy's girl friend chooses is not expensive. It is a fish restaurant. The plates are plastic. There is a bottle of tabasco sauce on each table. The girl friend doesn't at all like fancy food, although she doesn't mind accepting a bowl of chowder and a few glasses of wine.

A few booths over, a middle-aged couple are having an argument. They both have sunburns and wear white skirts and Haitian shirts. The argument seems to be about monograms. They are both yelling and one woman picks up a handful of oyster crackers and flings it into the other woman's face. The oyster crackers stick all over the woman's damp, sunburned face. The yard boy knows he should be satisfied with whatever situation arises but he is having a little difficulty with his enlightenment.

The yard boy's girl friend is not talking to him. She has not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been talking to him for days actually.

The woman that has been hit with the handful of oyster crackers walks past, an oyster cracker bobbing on her widow's peak.

The yard boy miserably eats his turbot. When they are finished, his girl friend goes to the cashier for some toothpicks. While she is gone, another girl comes up with a baby.

"Would you watch my baby for me while I go to the ladies'?" she asks.

The yard boy holds the baby. The girl leaves. The yard boy's girl friend returns. They don't talk about the baby or anything. The girl friend sighs and crosses her legs. An hour passes. The restaurant is about to close. The yard boy and his girl friend and the baby are the last patrons. There is no one in the ladies'. The yard boy calls the manager and the manager calls the police. The baby chortles and spits up a little, not much. The police let the girl friend go first, and a few hours later they let the yard boy go.

The yard boy gets into his truck and drives off.

Life and the world are merely the dance of illusion, the yard boy thinks. He smells baby on his sweater.

The yard boy's landlady has put her rabbit's foot fern out by the garbage cans. The yard boy picks it up and puts it in the cab of his truck. It goes wherever he goes now.

The yard boy gets a note from his girl friend. It says:

> My ego is too healthy for real involvement with you.
> I don't like you. Good-by.
>
> Alyce

The yard boy works for Mr. Crown who is an illustrator. Mr. Crown lives in a fine house on the bay. Across the street, someone is building an even finer house on the Gulf. Mr. Crown was once the most renowned illustrator of Western art in the country. In his studio he has George Custer's jacket. Sometimes the yard boy poses for Mr. Crown. The year be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fore, a gentleman in Cody, Wyoming, bought Mr. Crown's painting of an Indian who was the yard-boy for $50,000. This year, however, Mr. Crown is not doing so well. He has been reduced to illustrating children's books. His star is falling. Also, the construction across the street infuriates him. The new house will block off his view of the sun as the sun slides daily into the water.

Mr. Crown's publishers have told him that they are not interested in cowboys. Their computers have told him that the new minority in America today is the white female. There have been too many cowboys for too long.

The yard boy is spraying against scale and sooty mold.

"I don't need the money but I am insulted," Mr. Crown tells the yard boy.

Mr. Crown goes back into the house. The yard boy seeds some rye on the lawn's bare spots and then takes a break to get a drink of water. He sits in the cab of his truck and drinks from a plastic jug. He sprinkles some water on the rabbit's foot fern. The fern sits there on the seat, dribbling a little vermiculite, crazy as hell.

The fern and the yard boy sit.

It is not a peaceful spot to sit. The racket of the construction on the Gulf is considerable. Nonetheless, the yard boy swallows his water and attempts to dwell upon the dignity and simplicity of the moment.

Then there is the sound of gunfire. The yard boy cranes his neck out of the window of his pick-up truck and sees Mr. Crown firing from his studio at the workers across the street. It takes the workers several moments to realize that they are being shot at. The bullets make big mealy holes in the concrete. The bullets whine through the windows that will exhibit the sunset. The workers all give a howl and try to find cover. The yard boy curls up behind the wheel of his truck. The little rushy brown hairs on the fern's stalks stick straight out.

A few minutes later the firing stops. Mr. Crown goes back to the drawing board. No one is hurt. Mr. Crown is arrested

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and posts $25,000 bond. Charges are later dropped. The house across the street is built. Still, Mr. Crown seems calmer now. He gives up illustrating. When he wants to look at something, he looks at the bay. He tells the yard boy he is putting sunsets behind him.

The yard boy and the rabbit's foot fern drive from lawn to lawn in the course of their days, the fern tipping forward a little in its green pot, the wind folding back its leaves. In the wind, its leaves curl back like the lips of a Doberman Pinscher.

The yard boy sees things in the course of his work that he wouldn't dream of telling the fern even though the fern is his only confidante. The fern has a lot of space around it in which anything can happen but it doesn't have much of an emotional life because it is insane. Therefore, it makes a good confidante.

The yard boy has always been open. He has always let be and disowned. Nevertheless, he has lost the spontaneity of his awakened state. He is sad. He can feel it. The fern can feel it too which makes it gloomier than ever. Even so, the fern has grown quite fond of the yard boy. It wants to help him any way it can.

The yard boy doesn't rent a room any more. He lives in his truck. Then he sells his truck. He and the rabbit's foot fern sit on the beach. The fern lives in the shade of the yard boy. The yard boy doesn't live in the Now at all any more. He lives in the past. He thinks of his childhood. As a child, he had saved a dog from drowning. His parents had a living room that was forty-two feet long. His parents had another son who fell from one of Essex, Connecticut's last elms. He fell on his head and played with dolls for twenty-five years. When the yard boy has lived in the past as much as is reliable, he lives in the future. It is while he is living in the future that his girl friend walks by on the beach. She is walking by in a long wet t-shirt that says I'M NOT A TOURIST I LIVE HERE. The rabbit's foot fern alerts the yard boy and they both stare at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

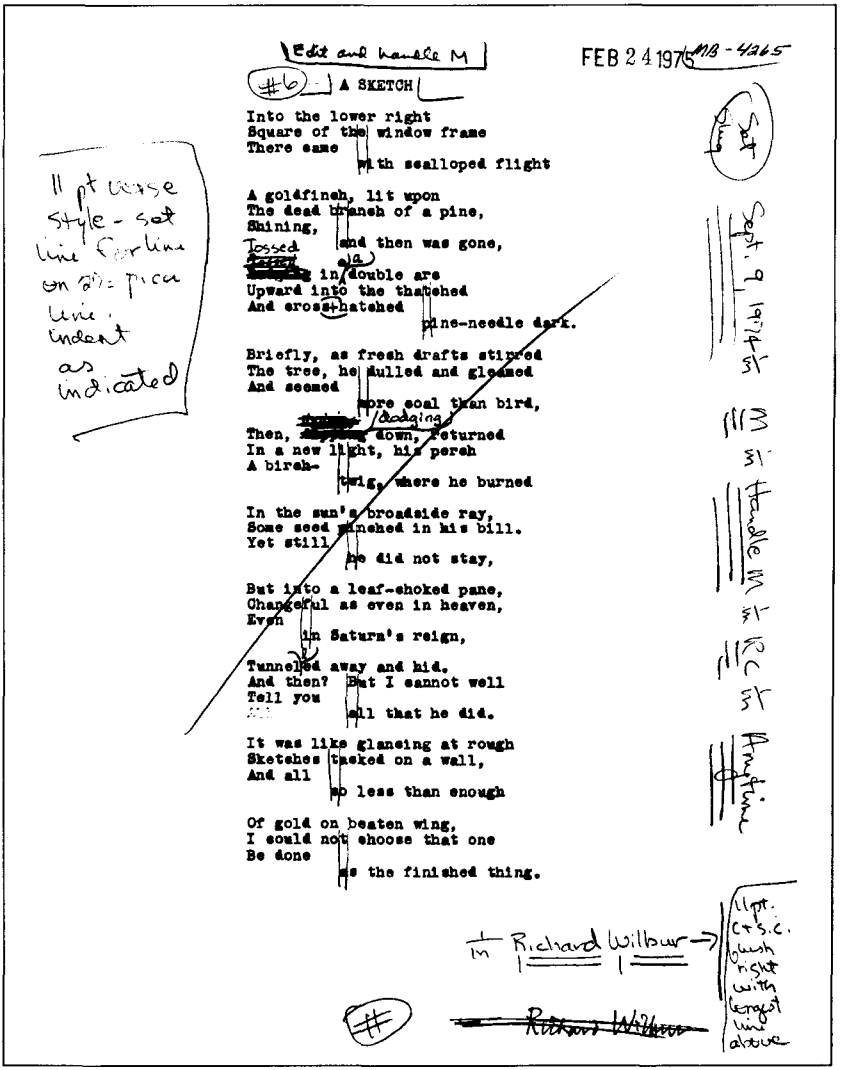
her as she walks by.

It is a beautiful day. The water is a smooth green, broken occasionally by porpoises rising. Between the yard boy and his girl friend is sand a little less white than the clouds. Behind the yard boy are plantings of cabbage palms and succulents and Spanish bayonets. The bayonets are harsh and green with spikes that end in black tips like stilettos.

Act but do not rely upon one's own abilities, thinks the yard boy. He chews upon his nails. The moon can shine in one hundred different bowls, he thinks. What a lot of junk the yard boy thinks. He is as lost in the darkness of his solid thoughts as a yard boy can be. He watches his girl friend angrily as she boogies by.

The rabbit's foot fern brightens at this. Its fuzzy long-haired rhizomes clutch its pot tightly. The space around it simmers, it bubbles. Each cell mobilizes its intent of skillful and creative action. It turns its leaves toward the Spanish bayonet. It straightens and sways. Straightens and sways. A moment passes. The message of retribution is received along the heated air. The Spanish bayonet uproots itself and moves out.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



A Richard Wilbur Manuscript Page

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Photo: Thomas Victor

Note: Two interviews were done with Richard Wilbur. Because of the different nature of the questioning, the interviews have been kept separate. The first is by Peter Stitt, the second by Ellessa Clay High and Helen McCloy Ellison.

This interview took place at Richard Wilbur's home in the Berkshire Mountains near Cummington, Massachusetts, on a Saturday afternoon in March of 1977. Mr. Wilbur's house sits on a hillside surrounded by New England hill-country farms; there are no wheatfields, but plenty of trees and dairy cows. The room we talked in had a large window through which we could see the remnants of a winter of heavy snow.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wilbur is a tall man who doesn't look his age—he leads an active life and takes good care of himself. He teaches during the fall semester and usually goes south for the winter. Recently he left Wesleyan University and became a Writer in Residence at Smith College, which is much closer to his home.

The Beautiful Changes and Other Poems, *Wilbur's first book, appeared in 1947. His most recent books were both published in 1976*—The Mind Reader: New Poems *and* Responses: Prose Pieces, 1953-1976. *Mr. Wilbur has edited works by Poe, Shakespeare, and others, and his many translations include four plays by Molière,* The Misanthrope, Tartuffe, The School for Wives, *and* The Learned Ladies. *He is the recipient of several prizes and awards, including the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, both of which were given for his* Things of this World *in 1957.*

INTERVIEWER

When did you begin writing poetry?

WILBUR

I began writing poetry as a small child, and became a hired poet at the age of eight when my first poem was published in *John Martin's Magazine.* As I remember it, it was a horrible little poem about nightingales, which I never could have seen or heard as an American child. Of course, I wasn't thinking of poetry as my chief activity or even chief avocation at that age. I was drawing pictures, playing the piano vilely, thinking of being a cartoonist or a painter, and imagining that I might be a journalist. Poetry was just one of the many products, and I can't be said to have done anything very prodigious.

INTERVIEWER

Were you paid for the poem?

WILBUR

Yes, a dollar. I still have the dollar somewhere. Over there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in that silo, which I cannot unlock because I've mislaid the key, there are all sorts of brown boxes full of memorabilia, and I think one of them contains the dollar.

INTERVIEWER

What eventually made you decide on a career as a poet?

WILBUR

I really drifted into it. When I was at Amherst College, I was Editor, or Chairman as they called it, of the College newspaper, and I did a lot of writing and drawing for the College humor magazine, *Touchstone*. At the same time, I felt a sort of vocation for the study of English literature and thought I might want to be a scholar. During World War II, I wrote poems to calm my own nerves and to send to my wife and a few friends, a few teachers at Amherst. Then when I came back after the war and went to Harvard on the G.I. Bill to get an M.A. in English, there was a friend we made there, a well-known French poet now, named André du Bouchet. He was involved with a little magazine called *Foreground,* which was being backed by Reynal and Hitchcock as a means of discovering new talent. André heard from my wife one evening that I had a secret cache of poems in my study desk. He asked to see them, then took them away to read. When he came back about an hour later, he kissed me on both cheeks and declared me to be a poet. He sent these poems off to Reynal and Hitchcock, and they also declared me to be a poet, saying that they would like to publish them, and others if I had them, as a book.

INTERVIEWER

How do you compose your poems? Do you write in long hand or on the typewriter? Do you write in bursts or long stretches, quickly or laboriously?

WILBUR

With pencil and paper and laboriously, very slowly on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whole. I do envy people who can compose on the typewriter, though I reject as preposterous Charles Olson's ideas about the relation of the typewriter to poetic form. I don't approach the typewriter until the thing is completely done, and whatever margins the typewriter might offer have nothing to do with the form of a poem as I conceive it. I write poems line by line, very slowly; I sometimes scribble alternative words in the margins rather densely, but I don't go forward with anything unless I am fairly satisfied that what I have set down sounds printable, sayable. I proceed as Dylan Thomas once told me he proceeded—it is a matter of going to one's study, or to the chair in the sun, and starting a new sheet of paper. On it you put what you've already got of a poem you are trying to write. Then you sit and stare at it, hoping that the impetus of writing out the lines that you already have will get you a few lines farther before the day is done. I often don't write more than a couple of lines in a day of, let's say, six hours of staring at the sheet of paper. Composition for me is, externally at least, scarcely distinguishable from catatonia.

INTERVIEWER

What is it that gets you started on a poem? Is it an idea, an image, a rhythm, or something else?

WILBUR

It seems to me that there has to be a sudden, confident sense that there is an exploitable and interesting relationship between something perceived out there and something in the way of incipient meaning within you. And what you see out there has to be seen freshly, or the process is not going to be provoked. Noting a likeness or resemblance between two things in nature can provide this freshness, but I think there must be more. For example, to perceive that the behavior of certain tree leaves is like the behavior of birds' wings is not, so far as I am concerned, enough to justify the sharpening of the pencil. There has to be a feeling that some kind of idea is implicit within that resemblance. It is strange how confident

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one can be about this. I always detest it when artists and writers marvel at their own creativity, but I think this is a very strange thing which most practiced artists would have in common, the certainty which accompanies these initial, provocative impressions. I am almost always right in feeling that there is a poem in something if it hits me hard enough. You can spoil your material, of course, but that doesn't mean the original feeling was false.

INTERVIEWER

You have been a teacher for many years. Does teaching complement your work as a poet?

WILBUR

I think the best part of teaching from the point of view of the teacher-writer, writer-teacher, is that it makes you read a good deal and makes you be articulate about what you read. You can't read passively because you have to be prepared to move other people to recognitions and acts of analysis. I know a few writers who don't teach and who, in consequence, do very little reading. This doesn't mean that they are bad writers, but in some cases I think they might be better writers if they read more. As for the experience of the classroom, I enjoy it; I am very depressed by classes which don't work, and rather elated by classes which do. I like to see if I can express myself clearly enough to stick an idea in somebody's head. Of course there are also disadvantages, one of which is that the time one spends teaching could be spent writing. Another involves this very articulateness of which I've been speaking. It uses the same gray cells, pretty much, that writing does, and so one can come to the job of writing with too little of a sense of rediscovery of the language. That is one reason I like to live out here in the country and lead a fairly physical life—play a lot of tennis, raise a lot of vegetables, go on a lot of long walks. I do things which are non-verbal so that I can return to language with excitement and move toward language from kinds of strong awareness for which I haven't instantly found

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

facile words. It is good for a writer to move into words out of the silence, as much as he can.

INTERVIEWER

As a young man, did you ever do what John Berryman did so consciously—visit older poets, to learn from them or to sit at their feet?

WILBUR

Not as a very young man, though I knew Robert Frost rather well when I was in my latter twenties and thereafter. My *entrée* was not so much my own merits as my wife's. Her grandfather, William Hayes Ward, was the first person to publish Robert Frost. He edited *The Independent,* a journal of literature and opinion which later turned into *The Outlook,* which later still became *The Literary Digest.* So Frost was very fond of my wife's family. He was also responsive to the fact that I knew most of his poems by heart. And then I had the luck to please him with a few of my own poems. So there is someone at whose feet I have sat, although after a while I got up off the floor and we were just friends. And let's see—I have never made pilgrimages, though I've always been delighted to meet people about whose work I cared. I loved meeting people like Stevens and Williams and Marianne Moore, usually at performances which they gave. I introduced Stevens one time when he gave a splendid reading at Sanders Theatre at Harvard. Unfortunately, I am the only person who heard the reading because the sound equipment was not working. I was sitting on the stage next to him, and it sounded wonderful, but the acoustics in that building are so bad that everyone else was forced to sit through an hour of silence. And they respected him so much that they did it gratefully. Luckily, the tape recorder was working, so we have a record of that occasion.

INTERVIEWER

Did Frost seem to you the kind of man that Lawrance

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thompson says he was in his biography?

WILBUR

I think most of Thompson's evidence is undoubtedly true. But since I take a more positive view of Frost's character than Thompson, I don't find those books agreeable to read. I think Thompson is reacting against the phony picture—the mellow old New England fellow—which Frost gave of himself and which his admirers so often gave. He was, as I well knew, a much more dark and dangerous person than that. There was paranoia in him, and a savage competitiveness. But that is not what you felt when you were with him. Personally, he was extremely warm. You could occasionally put him off, because in eighty-odd years he never lost his original touchiness. But he would come back; perhaps he would even like you better for having braced him a little. I can remember putting him off several times. Once I said to him in Cambridge that he ought to go down to Washington and get Ezra Pound out of the madhouse, that he shouldn't allow his old bitterness and envies against Pound to detain him. I said, "You don't want to be a Brutus, and I don't mean the Brutus in Shakespeare, I mean that other Brutus who was so perfect a Roman judge that he sentenced his own sons to death." Having said that, of course, I winced, because I remembered that Frost's son had committed suicide and that many people, Frost included, had felt that he bore some responsibility in the matter. Well, Frost winced too, and glared at me for a bit, but he finally felt that I and other people who urged him in that manner were right, and acted on it. Another time, as I was leaving his cabin in Ripton, he called me back, and said, with a very youthful diffidence, that he hoped it was understood that we were friends. There wasn't any question of our being enemies, of course; he was just saying that we had had a good talk and he was sorry I was going, something like that. It came very close to being tenderness, and it also came out of, as did so much that he spoke, a very deep loneliness. I was tremendously touched. It seems to me that this kind of thing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is not frequent enough in the Thompson biography—what I've read of it. People were always saying, around Bread Loaf and Ripton, that the world did not know the real Robert Frost. I suppose Thompson is telling the world what it never knew. Perhaps he has lost his balance and is over-telling them. So often, I think, a biographical study is likely to be written in a corrective spirit, as was John Brinnin's *Dylan Thomas in America*. There were so many damn fools who thought that Dylan was a healthy, bouncing, priapic figure, rebuking us all for our stuffiness, whereas, although he had been a delight to be with, he had also been a sick man drinking himself to death. Brinnin, as Thomas's closest associate in America, had seen that horror, and had seen the almost willful incomprehension of the many people who adored Dylan and tagged along after him and drank with him. So he had to write the book to correct a false impression, to put the horror on record, and many people didn't understand what had moved him.

INTERVIEWER

You have said that "the work of every good poet may be seen in one way or another as an exploration and declaration of the self." Is this true in your own case?

WILBUR

I don't think that I explore myself in poetry in the way in which some so-called confessional poets do, although I must say I am writing many more poems out of my actual experience and my relationships. But I usually have a certain sense of distance from my material, a feeling that I am not spilling my guts but arranging some materials and trying to find out the truth about them. If, in the process, I also find out something about myself, I think it is indirectly done. It is the thing, and not myself, which I set out to explore. But then, having chosen my subject and explored it, and having seen what I can say, I suppose one result of the poem is that I know myself a little better. There are certain things I find

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that I will not say, and there are certain matters to which I keep coming back. I would rather not name them because I think they are clear enough in the poems. The funny thing is that I often won't know that I have reapproached a subject until a new poem has been finished. Then I will say, oh yes, this turned out to be that question again. My process of self-exploration is almost as strangely indirect as that of Beau Brummell in a story that I remember hearing told about him. Somebody asked Brummell which one of the northern lakes he preferred. He turned to his valet and said, "Which one of the northern lakes do I prefer?" "I believe it is Windermere, sir," the valet replied. So Brummell said to his questioner, "Apparently it is Windermere." I see some resemblance between that process and the process by which I make discoveries about myself. I ask some poem to write itself, and once I am through supervising that process, I have discovered whether I like Windermere or not.

I do feel that the truth, especially the truth about oneself, is hard to report, and that if you set out to confess, what you are likely to do is tell lies in addition to reporting some of the truth. And the fact that you are consciously part of the material of the poem may lead you to falsify in ways that are not good. There are good fictions and bad fictions. The kind of fiction which glamorizes you is not good either for your sake or for the reader's, and I think that very often the confessional poet is drawn to glamorize himself, whether he is aware of it or not.

INTERVIEWER

One reviewer of your work has written: "in many of his new poems, Wilbur still addresses us as if he were the only one alive." How do you feel reading something like that?

WILBUR

I remember seeing that somewhere. I think the critic is reacting to the personality which he feels behind the poems he has read. We all do this, of course, but I am sorry that my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

critic does not like what he has seen in or through my work. Perhaps his idea of humanity in speech and in art involves a greater directness and a higher degree of blurting than he finds in me. I don't like the kind of poetry which seems to harangue the reader. D. H. Lawrence, for example, some of whose work I think is marvelous, can be a dreadful haranguer. Perhaps that reviewer would like the instancy and the insistence of Lawrence, who is indeed dealing directly with his reader, though he is also dealing carelessly with his lines in the process. Lawrence always writes at his worst when he is hectoring an imagined reader. But maybe my critic doesn't like Lawrence either. It is hard to know why these reactions happen. I remember a case that may be similar to this one. Toward the end of World War II, I had a friend—we really did like one another—who came out of a kind of ethnic, urban world. He was periodically exasperated by what he felt was my WASP cool. He would come and stand next to my cot in the barracks and say: "Wilbur, why don't you join the human race?" I would ask him what I could do in order to join the human race, but he never made any specific suggestions—he'd just tell me to loosen up, that sort of thing. I think it is possible that there are some critics for whom one's poetry just cannot work because of temperamental differences and distances.

INTERVIEWER

You have said, "I do think that there is nothing more dangerous to the imagination than fantasy." Many people would equate the two things. Could you elaborate on that?

WILBUR

To me, the imagination is a faculty which fuses things, takes hold of the physical and ideal worlds and makes them one, provisionally. Fantasy, in my mind, is a poetic or artistic activity which leaves something out—it ignores the concrete and the actual in order to create a purely abstract, unreal realm. If we think of fantasy at its least dignified, non-artistic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

level, this becomes obvious. Sexual reverie very clearly leaves something out, and that something is the physical object of one's desire.

INTERVIEWER

Edgar Allan Poe is a writer who relies a good deal on fantasy; his work and his theory of art both seem very different from yours. What, then, is the basis of your fascination with him?

WILBUR

I first read Poe sensitively during World War II, in a foxhole at Monte Cassino. The extreme isolation of my situation made for a great power to concentrate. I felt a tremendous symbolic or allegorical depth beneath Poe's prose, and this excited my curiosity. I have been reading him ever since, and find myself continually discovering new things. I tried to write a book on him when I was a Junior Fellow at Harvard, between 1947 and 1950, but it didn't quite pan out. I hadn't yet found a language sufficient to describe the operation of his work as I saw it. So I began to write short pieces on him. I think I have said a certain number of things about him which are true, and it is fun to have been a discoverer. Now as for our conflict, Edgar's and mine, I object to him simply because he is far too much a fantasist. Or, as Allen Tate put it, the trouble with him is that his imagination does not proceed upward through the order of nature, moving toward the invisible through the visible. Instead, he tries to destroy the visible world on the assumption that if you do that, then the invisible world will rush in to take its place. Well, I question that formula, but I think it is an exciting mistake and resulted in a number of remarkable works.

INTERVIEWER

But you don't seem to care much for his poetry.

WILBUR

I have a strong weakness for certain of the poems—"To

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One in Paradise,'' for example. But too much of the poetry is virtually pure incantation, its substance being cloudy or predestroyed. The fiction, for my money, is far more accessible and far more defensible aesthetically. Poe's stories have a neo-Platonic or gnostic myth for their frame, but within that frame we're also given wonderful pictures of the states and motions and conflicts of the psyche. Modern studies of the dream-process are just catching up with some things which Poe noticed and, in his own way, set down.

INTERVIEWER

Certain critics describe your poetry as rigid in its formality, old-fashioned. Perhaps in an age of loose forms—of free verse, the prose poem and the plain style—your practice strikes them as odd.

WILBUR

It is true that I have used a metrical basis in almost every poem that I have written, and it is true that more than half of my poems rhyme. At the same time, we must recognize that meter in itself is not rigid—it depends on how you use it. I hope that in my best poems I have used meter flexibly, so that the rhythm of a given poem is appropriate to its mood and its subject. Robert Lowell wrote me a friendly note when ''Walking to Sleep'' came out in the *New Yorker,* praising among other things the looseness of my pentameters. I didn't know what to make of that at first; I didn't think my pentameters were especially loose. But his remark led me to see that they sometimes were and are—that in contrast to many poets I pay little heed to the decasyllabic norm. Most of my poems are put together in the way in which free verse comes about. That is to say, I start talking the poem to myself, and I wait to see what rhythmic lengths the poem naturally wants to fall into. Having let the poem have its head for five or six lines, I decide whether or not I have a stanza. By that time I also probably have discovered whether the poem wants to rhyme, whether it wants to emphasize itself or deepen its sound by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rhyming. This seems to me a perfectly organic way to proceed with a poem. Very seldom has this approach gotten me into a formal strait-jacket in which it was impossible to develop the thought as the thought wanted to develop. That can happen. I think one could start out in a very difficult form, like terza rima, and find that the natural drift of the thoughts and perceptions was being impeded, was being falsified, by the technical difficulties. What you do at that point is to start over, maybe, or eliminate some of your rhymes. So I would say that I approach a poem in just the way a free-verse writer does. What matters is the subject and the words which are going to be found for conveying and exploring the subject. The only difference is that I include meters and rhymes in my free-verse proceeding.

INTERVIEWER

James Wright talks of formalism liberating the imagination rather than confining it. Does this make sense to you?

WILBUR

Oh, yes. I have argued that for years. I think it is perfectly true that if you put yourself in a position where you have to pay attention to all sorts of wild suggestions which come to you through the sound contract you have made, it can be liberating. If you are a silly person, it will ruin your poem because you will let the rhyme twist your thought, take your mind off where you were going. But if you are not silly, it can be very enriching and instructive. I don't really take an Apollonian approach to poetry. I think you have to be using your brains all the time, yes, but your brains have to be very attentive to the stupid part of you. I trust the stupid part at least as much. And one way of extorting suggestions from that part of you is through the use of formal devices such as rhyme and stanzaic patterns.

INTERVIEWER

A reviewer, referring to your use of formalism, has called

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you "a bell too conscious of its clapper, clapper-happy."

WILBUR

I guess that means that I am self-conscious about the sound of my own voice, and I think I would have to plead guilty in some measure. Every line that I set down is considerably pondered, and while I try to have a colloquial and dashing movement in my poems, it does not satisfy me if they are not of a more than colloquial density or import. Now I always find self-consciousness annoying in other people—carefulness I don't. I find gaudiness annoying, richness not. All I can say in answer to that criticism is that I hope that some people find me more careful and rich than clapper-happy.

INTERVIEWER

There is a good deal of attention being paid today to the poem sequence and even to the long poem, as in Warren and Berryman, for example. Do you have any inclination to work along those lines?

WILBUR

I'm not sure any of my poems could qualify as long. I write so slowly that anything which is, let's say, a hundred and fifty lines long seems to me like a long poem. I haven't recently counted the lines of my longer poems, like "The Agent" or "Walking to Sleep" or "The Mind Reader," but I do know that "Walking to Sleep" takes eight minutes to read aloud. And that is about as long as I believe I am likely to get. "Walking to Sleep" has the density of any of my lyrics—every line has a certain amount of trouble in it—and I think that if I were to write a sixteen-minute poem of that same density, it would be very hard for the reader to consume. If I were to write a longer poem, I think I would have to become more open, plainer, more prosaic, for considerable stretches. Who can tell what he will do? I must say the idea is attractive to me, the idea of seeing how simple I could be and still get away with it. I believe I have been getting simpler as I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have gone along. In my last book, in fact, there are some lines—I don't think I have any poems which are simple in toto—which are so simple that an unfriendly reviewer in the *Times* was able to extract them and say, look how dull Wilbur can be. But when I was putting down those simple lines—lines like "It is always a matter, my darling, of life or death, as I had forgotten"—I was excited by their very simplicity. They occur within poems which, taken as a whole, are not altogether simple, which you might have to read two or three times to consume. Everytime I encounter a good translation of a Chinese poem, I am teased by the thought that it would be nice to try that sort of thing. A good Chinese poem, as Witter Bynner says in his *Jade Mountain,* makes most of our poetry look over-dressed and self-important. And a good Chinese poem is so much the poem of its moment—it is attractive in that way too.

Well, all I can say is that such things attract me, but I don't have any notion of what I am going to do next. I have written almost no poetry for about a year now, though I have translated a play of Molière's—"The Learned Ladies." That is part of my excuse. The rest of my excuse is that I really did say to myself recently that I must escape altogether from the impulse to over-achieve, which can possess you once you get into the business of producing books of poetry. I called up Stanley Kunitz the day John Berryman killed himself. We consoled one another and talked about whether his act had been predictable. One thing we agreed upon was this, that whereas Stanley and I do many things apart from poetry—we both love gardening, for example—John Berryman was such a very hard worker that he lived almost entirely within his profession. Some of the dream songs seem to drag in a good deal of the world, but they do it mainly through books and *Time* magazine and the daily newspaper. The impression one is left with is of a man who is working desperately hard at his job. Well, I admire that, but I think it can break your health and destroy your joy in life and art. I haven't got any clever hypotheses about why John killed himself, but a statement of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stanley's during that telephone conversation has stuck in my mind. He said: "In this country it is not enough just to publish a book of good poems and forever after be thanked for it. It should be possible, but it's not." As soon as you publish a book of poems, people begin to say, when is your next book coming out? And if you don't publish books at intervals of three years, they say, why are you so slow? I have been reproached in the *Times Literary Supplement* for taking seven years to get out a book, you know. That kind of pressure is not good for you and isn't good for your work. Stanley said: "As soon as you publish a book of poems in this country, you are in the poetry prison." I think John felt himself to be in the poetry prison, and that may have been contributory to his death.

INTERVIEWER

You once said—and here is another quotation for you—"there's always some impulse in the American writer to set out for the frontier in some sense, to head for the savage, the original, the uncivilized, to stand loose from whatever actual coherences people may try to thrust upon him." Have you felt this impulse, and do you think it shows up in your poetry?

WILBUR

Yes, I feel the impulse. I think that, like most Americans, I have considerable respect for the actual and physical. We are all kickers of stones, you know, and we are not as likely to get enchanted with abstract thought systems as some Europeans, especially the French, are. The French are always coming up with enormously boring notions which they consider *très très très interessantes.* A man like Sartre can get a whole book out of a proposition which is, on the face of it, untrue, the proposition that Jean Genet, because he is masochistic, has the humility of a saint. There isn't any point in saying that even once, but a French intellectual can get a whole book out of it. I suppose we Americans are at fault in the other direction,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that we are too primitive and have too much respect for the voiceless and the unvoiceable. Maybe it is just that we are closer to the frontier than they are, and therefore are less capable of getting lost in our minds—we are surer that there is something out there.

INTERVIEWER

I take it that you would not then agree with the critic who said: "Wilbur does not really care for things. For Wilbur, the call to things is equivalent to 'the punctual rape of every blessed day.'"

WILBUR

That is not true at all. The critic is entitled to his insight—we all have to make guesses like this about what we are reading. But that is not how I feel. I feel intensely drawn to things, I think more drawn to things than to thoughts. Since the world has to pass through thought in order to come out as poetry, it may not be immediately obvious that I am drawn to things. But I sure am.

INTERVIEWER

Could I ask which of your books and which of your poems are your favorites?

WILBUR

I'm not sure about that. There is always the coy answer in which you say that your most recent work is your favorite because you hope so desperately that it is not a decline. I think it is possible that my best book is *Things of this World.* I have not tired of most of the poems in it, and I don't find any conspicuous failures there, whereas there are a couple of poems in *Advice to a Prophet* which I wish had never happened. Usually when I feel that way about a poem, I think it has to do with a lack of originality—sounding too much like somebody else. As for my favorite poems, I like "Walking to Sleep" very much. And I haven't gotten tired of "Love Calls

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Us to the Things of this World.'' Since I have read that so often to audiences, it seems to me that I have given it the acid test—it must for me have a lasting strength. And then I like the new poem to my daughter, the one called ''The Writer.'' But I enjoyed that also as a formal departure; I enjoyed not rhyming for a change.

INTERVIEWER

Let me conclude by asking your reaction to a comment which William Meredith made about you. He said that you ''obviously believe that the universe is decent, in the lovely, derivative sense of that word.''

WILBUR

Well, yes. To put it simply, I feel that the universe is full of glorious energy, that the energy tends to take pattern and shape, and that the ultimate character of things is comely and good. I am perfectly aware that I say this in the teeth of all sorts of contrary evidence, and that I must be basing it partly on temperament and partly on faith, but that is my attitude. My feeling is that when you discover order and goodness in the world, it is not something you are imposing—it is something which is likely really to be there, whatever crumminess and evil and disorder there may also be. I don't take disorder or meaninglessness to be the basic character of things. I don't know where I get my information, but that is how I feel.

PETER STITT

» » » » » »

This interview with Richard Wilbur took place in Louisville, Kentucky.

INTERVIEWER

Do you see being more personal as an evolution in your work? Have you been holding back from the personal?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILBUR

Yes, I think so. I think I've held back from the personal, perhaps out of reserve. Lately, however, I've begun to crumble a bit, and write more shamelessly of what is near to me. Also, I think, getting older is a process of getting gradually more and more soft-hearted. And you do begin to draw in a little as you get older. I think of Auden's book *About the House,* which is just a book about *his* house; the different rooms in it, the things he does there, the friends who come to dinner. It's the book of a man who's—maybe he's a little tired of writing about grand subjects and just wants to print some puttering poems, the way a retired man putters around the house.

INTERVIEWER

Over the years some critics have accused your poetry of detachment. It sounds as if you are agreeing with them for the first time.

WILBUR

Well, I think it's inevitable that there be some detachment, and that whoever speaks in the poem is going to be a contrived self. And whatever is said is going to be said because—well, an opportunity to write a good poem presented itself. Sometimes very strong feelings don't get written up because the interesting metaphor or dramatic situation doesn't suggest itself. So much of one's life goes unused.

I remember out in San Francisco in 1956 I spent an afternoon with Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Robert Duncan, and we had a party that evening. I'm not going to be able to remember all these names, but there were a lot of people there; and the big, exciting thing was that Allen Ginsberg had just read "Howl." I don't know whether the poem had even been published as yet by City Lights, but he'd read it in San Francisco, and people had tape recordings of it. There was a lot of hurrah about it. I don't know whether the word "Beat" was yet being used, but the style was certainly evolving there.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was a roomful of young followers of Allen and of others who were wearing what was beginning to be the prescribed clothing—the jeans, bare feet or desert boots—and they were all full of romance about riding the rods. Everyone was talking about railroads, and at one point I said: "What one must never jump on, of course, is an oil car, since what you have to hold onto is a very hot pipe which is situated at a bad position and requires you to lean out from the car in the shape of an L." And somebody said: "Mr. Wilbur, did I hear you rightly? Have you ridden the rods? Have you been a knight of the road?" And I said: "Yes." He said: "Why didn't it get into your poetry?" I couldn't tell him then, but I think I know now. I believe that I did my hoboing in so romantic a spirit that I was operating within the poetry of others.

INTERVIEWER

It would be like being in Pamplona, thinking of Hemingway, and not writing.

WILBUR

Of course; that's right. Run with the bulls at Pamplona and somehow it is not an action entirely of your own.

INTERVIEWER

The Ginsberg reading you mentioned makes me think of Gary Snyder. Is he more than a "knight of the road" in your opinion?

WILBUR

Yes. I like his early book *Riprap.* I guess my reservation about him would have to do with its being too easy to predict what he's going to say about anything. . . his too-reflexive primitivism.

INTERVIEWER

I'm not sure what you mean.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILBUR

Well, admiration for the life of the woods, for the Indian, for unspoiled land; and rejection of cities. Of course, such attitudes are fairly easy to share, but it seems to me that he doesn't explore them, he doesn't criticize them, he doesn't sophisticate them quite enough. . . . It's more complicated than he lets it be by simply heading for the mountains or the monastery. John Frederick Nims once said about the *Selected Poems* of Snyder's that it was "Polaroid poetry." Too much of it follows William Carlos Williams' weaker poems, I think, in simply telling you some things that are there, in a tone of breathless simplicity—the cloud stands above the mountain —*so what?!* That's the reservation I have about some of his work, but I do think he's one of the most talented of that whole group, don't you?

INTERVIEWER

Along these lines, you said in your essay on Emily Dickinson that poets write about what vexes them. What vexes you?

WILBUR

I'd rather testify about other people, I suppose. I'm wary of that kind of self-analysis. I know that I have poems in which I set two voices going against each other. One is a kind of lofty and angelic voice, the other is a slob voice, and these are two parts of myself quarreling in public. I suppose the quarrel is fundamentally of a religious nature, and that the slob, in whom I trust a great deal, is saying to the angelic part: "Come off it. Get down here where you belong." I suppose I've written a lot of poems which relate to that kind of tug-of-war going on in me. Then there'd be other ways, no doubt, which I don't want to explore, of figuring out what it is that gets under my skin.

INTERVIEWER

You're saying that you *are* the speaker in your poems?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILBUR

Any poem that divides into two parts projects two aspects of me, debating. Self-projection, in a general sense, is inescapable. I don't think I would try to express anything in a poem which was absolutely not myself. On the other hand, I don't know of anything which is absolutely not myself, including Adolf Hitler.

INTERVIEWER

In the context of this balance which you like to keep in your own work, in "Cottage Street, 1953," you call Sylvia Plath's poetry "unjust." Are you referring to what you see as her poetry's onesidedness?

WILBUR

Its helpless onesidedness. I tried to sprinkle a whole lot of words around there which would add up to a kind of just estimate of her. That, together with the picture I had given of her as a slumped, pale, drowning person. Let the record show that I said *brilliant:* "her brilliant negative. In poems free and helpless and unjust." I suppose she was freed by the onset of her desperate condition of mind to be brilliant in the way the poems of *Ariel* are brilliant. At the same time, she was helpless because it required that condition of mind to bring on those poems. She was unjust because a sick and prejudiced perception of things is—well, that's the limitation on the usefulness of her poetry to any reader, I think. It gives you some insights into a desperate condition of mind which is *not absolutely foreign* to the rest of us, but which goes farther towards morbidity than I've ever gone, thank God. At the same time there's a lot she can't tell you. She's all wrapped up in herself and her feelings about her children, and herself as a writer, and her fantasies about her dead father, and her arbitrary connections between her dead father and her husband. I don't suppose we need to know that her father was not a Nazi in order to read that poem ["Daddy"] rightly,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or do we? In any case, she's rather unjust to him. She's certainly unjust to her mother.

INTERVIEWER

Diane Wakoski has said she thinks confessional poetry is misnamed—that Plath and Lowell and Sexton are not confessing anything, but are writing out of feelings, like pain, that most of us don't find acceptable as material.

WILBUR

Well, I really think Sylvia Plath's latter poems, when unfortunately she was at her best, were crazy, and that, whatever virtues they have, they have that limitation. I don't think Lowell's best work is to be described in that way. I think whenever he's been emotionally ill it hasn't enabled him to write. He hasn't written out of illness, but in spite of it. The same story with Roethke, and I'm sure the same with Anne Sexton, whom I didn't know as well. As for pain, it's acceptable and necessary material. One of the jobs of poetry is to make the unbearable bearable, not by falsehood but by clear, precise confrontation. Even the most cheerful poet has to cope with pain as part of the human lot; what he shouldn't do is to complain, and dwell on his personal mischance.

INTERVIEWER

You once said: "You write a translation because someone else has written a poem which you love and you want to take possession of it." How did you go about translation, for instance, of Brodsky's poem, "The Funeral of Bobò," in *The Mind Reader?*

WILBUR

It took me all one month of January to work out its forty-eight lines, because Brodsky, whom I like very much, is very fussy about accuracy. I gather he's been very accurate when he's translated me, doing the rhymes and meters. There isn't any use doing it otherwise, I think. And so when I did

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Bobò" I had to do it with something approaching absolute fidelity. I sent my translation to Carl Proffer, his friend at Ann Arbor, with fear and trembling, because in the last stanza I had in fact put in three words that were not in Joseph's original but, I thought, were in keeping with the drift of it. I damned well needed them for a rhyme, too! And I said: "Please clear this with Joseph." And Joseph said they were all right.

INTERVIEWER

Brodsky complained at a reading here in Louisville that Akhmatova's poems had been poorly translated. They had not been rhymed.

WILBUR

He was objecting, I think, to Stanley Kunitz's translation of Akhmatova, which is probably the best book of Akhmatova around in English. But I guess what Joseph minds is that Stanley didn't work hard enough to get the meters and get the rhymes. Maybe Stanley's reply would be, "It wasn't a matter of working hard or not working hard. I felt that some of her poems could be translated into more relaxed English forms." I noticed recently that Denise Levertov and Joseph were tilting at each other in the pages of *The American Poetry Review:* Denise said, if I remember rightly, that Joseph, as a Russian, was much more used to an emphatic use of strict meter than English poets are, and that for him, therefore, the absence of meter and rhyme in a translation from a Russian poet would seem an appalling deprivation; but that for the American reader, for whom presumably the translation was intended, a more-relaxed rendering might be the more enabling sort of treatment. I think that's what Denise said—I still don't agree with it, except in one particular case.

INTERVIEWER

You once said that you do translations only when you're not working on your own poetry. Why is this?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILBUR

It would require a mad degree of self-knowledge to know exactly when you are capable of doing your own work and when you're not. But there are some circumstances under which it is easier to translate than to try to go ahead with a poem of your own. I think that in order to work on your own poem you need to baby yourself sort of totally, not to have the telephone ring, not otherwise to be vulnerable. I somehow can't work on poetry, which is the most important thing in my life, until I've taken care of all the unimportant things: written that silly letter, marked the class papers, *mowed the lawn!* At any rate, I've gotten into that fussy frame of mind now, whereas I can translate Molière riding on a plane, sitting in a motel. I have with me on this trip a translation of *The Learned Ladies,* which has almost reached the end of the second act, and in a frustrating recent day full of flights, limousines and buses I got four lines done to my satisfaction. And that's a fair average even if one were sitting in a living room. Some days you get sixteen lines done, some days none.

INTERVIEWER

You've written that World War II was instrumental in starting you in poetry, that it gave you a need to organize your world. Can you tell us about that?

WILBUR

I think it was no different for me than for anybody else in that regard. War is an uprooting experience—that's at the very least what it is. It sends you to other places, puts you in other clothes, gives you another name and a serial number. And it also fills your head with doubts as to what the world will become, an accelerated sense of change. And then, of course, if you're in a line company it fills your ears with "Bang! Bang!" and your heart with fear. And there's all of this to be allayed as best one can. There are letters from home, or you can drink: there are all kinds of ways to forget

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

how frightened and disoriented you are. But I think one of the best is to take pencil and paper—which is all you need, thank heavens, to be a poet and which makes it possible to practice poetry in a foxhole—and organize, not the whole of it, because of course you cannot put the world in order, but make some little pattern—make an experience. That is to say, jell things into an experience which will be a poem.

INTERVIEWER

Your first book, *The Beautiful Changes,* contains many war poems, and your Vietnam-era books contain very few. Didn't Vietnam suggest fresh combinations to you?

WILBUR

Not very many. I have one poem called "On the Marginal Way," in the background of which you strongly feel the Vietnam War; and the poem explicitly states that I regard it as a dirty war. I also wrote what I called "A Miltonic Sonnet for Mr. Johnson," abusing him roundly and comparing him unfavorably to the founder of his party, Thomas Jefferson. But I had a distance from the Vietnam War. My physical involvement with it was limited to peace parades and those poetic-protest read-ins which got to be rather tiresome on the poetic side, but which, I suppose, were politically virtuous. So, heavens, I didn't have concrete material to deal with as I did in such poems as I got out of World War II. In World War II I'm talking about the gun that's strapped on your shoulder, and the mine detectors that you're observing as they sweep back and forth across the ground—all kinds of details.

INTERVIEWER

The status of female poets, or of our consciousness of them, has changed considerably in the past few years. Thinking of that, we wanted to ask about a view you expressed in an interview in *The New York Quarterly* in 1972. You said you believed that men and women have different sensibilities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILBUR

Yes, I know I'm on dangerous ground in saying that, but I still think it's true. I do think that men are capable of greater emptiness and abstraction. I don't believe in the possibility of a female Hegel, for example, and I have a feeling that women have their feet on the ground, on the average, a little more than men do, even though men tend to etherealize women in their imaginations, through their affection. It's therefore a continuous surprise to notice how women know where they are, and know what's around, and men are, by comparison, less practical and less concerned with the concrete. That may be a big lie, but it is an impression of mine.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think the difference is biologically-based, innate?

WILBUR

I suppose it may have some biological foundation. Some feminist friends of mine disallow almost all efforts to discover biological differences between men and women. One of them was telling me sternly the other day that women could throw baseballs just as well as men, if they weren't told that they couldn't throw baseballs, and that may very well be true.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think there are male/female topics anymore? Or ever were?

WILBUR

No. I think perhaps there were, but I don't think there are now. I really don't. I suppose that we're all still sufficiently conditioned so that we feel that some materials are *slightly* more the province of men than of women: a woman being obscene is slightly obscener than a man being obscene, I think, and attracts more attention.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

How do you relate what you say about men, women, and abstraction to poetry?

WILBUR

I think of the great describers of the twentieth century and they'd be people like Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop —and D.H. Lawrence, who had, whatever I mean by this, a very strong feminine element in his nature, so that he was able to write poems about men from the woman's point of view which both men and women can read with a sense of belief. He's also a great describer of objects, whereas I think there's considerably less vivid description in Eliot, in Pound, in all sorts of male poets I might name. Now you're going to give me trouble by naming William Carlos Williams, who's an extremely masculine person and a great describer. All I can say is that my theory doesn't entirely hold water.

INTERVIEWER

You almost seem to be saying that women have a more natural disposition to be poets.

WILBUR

I don't know about that. I think of poetry in terms of the compressed expression of the whole of one's experience, all at once; the combining of things; the bringing together of all those things which we variously call sensation, and thought, and passion, by whatever names we call them; and any poetry which isn't concrete is going to be a flawed poetry. So, in that respect, such women poets as I've mentioned, and such men poets as are like them, have one capability without which: nothing. Or—I'll have to take that back, because I do think that there are some poems which have no concreteness in them and, nevertheless, are successful. But in the long run, one would not be satisfied with poetry which didn't seem to touch down in the mundane, in the actual.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

That was one of your criticisms of Poe's poetry, wasn't it, that it wasn't grounded enough in the concrete.

WILBUR

Yes. He is hurrying away from it as fast as he can go. He has to mention it in order to destroy it! Otherwise, you'd see nothing but the smoke. He will say "seas," and then will add, "without a shore," and make it impossible for you to think of any sea that you ever heard of.

INTERVIEWER

What would you do with Emily Dickinson, then? She's a woman who seems to work in the abstract.

WILBUR

Yes, she does. Toward the abstract, I would say, as David Porter has recently shown so well. She writes a great many poems in the riddle form, and some of them are the kind of riddle which has a concrete answer. Many of them are. And she's brilliant in that kind of extreme descriptive test. A poem like the one about the hummingbird—how does it begin?: "A Route of Evanescence / With a revolving Wheel." There's no problem about getting the answer to that riddle. And she's a great describer in a lot of poems which aren't riddles; and yet she keeps taking the qualities of sensible things and abstracting them before your very eyes, and then sometimes combining qualities taken from here and from there without giving you any objects to look at. For instance, the way she uses purple. She draws purple perhaps from the sunset more than any other place; also, from associations with royalty. In "Success is counted sweetest" there's purple, isn't there, associated with victory: "Not one of all the purple Host / Who took the Flag today / Can tell the definition / So clear of Victory"—I think that's it. Purple, the purple throng. Surely they're not colored purple; surely not dripping with blood, it wouldn't be purple in that sense. It must be the royal purple—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

Or religious?

WILBUR

Yes, could be. Though she was a Congregationalist, I think she uses a broader religious vocabulary than that church would have entitled her to. I don't think they care much about vestments in the Congregational Church.

INTERVIEWER

I've been wondering which female poets you think share your concern for precision and form—Carolyn Kizer and Ruth Stone, perhaps?

WILBUR

Yes, I like both of those poets. And I think that they are both very careful constructors of poems, careful choosers of words. I like Carolyn Kizer's "Blue Heron" poem, for example, very much, and with Ruth Stone's poems I have many favorites. I like her new book, *Cheap,* that recently came out.

INTERVIEWER

Getting back to your new book, the title poem is a rather long one for you—

WILBUR

Yes, I don't know how many lines it is, but when printed in the small type of *The New York Review of Books* it filled a page in double column. When I looked at that page solid with my poem, it made me feel very productive, but of course it had taken me about a year to do it.

INTERVIEWER

That's the poem that stems from the mind reader you saw in Rome years ago?

WILBUR

Yes. I'd been thinking about him for twenty-odd years.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

Is an extended poem a greater effort? Is it somehow "more" of a poem?

WILBUR

I've never written a poem long enough to have to deal with the problem of density of language. I remember Robert Frost's giving a lecture at Bread Loaf on the exciting title, "The Dullness of Wordsworth," and everyone flocked in to hear whether he was going to insult Wordsworth in public, and, no, of course, he was going to praise him for being willing to produce prosaic bridge passages between his great moments. But my so-called long poems are at the worst eight-minute poems; so rightly or wrongly I don't feel that I have to come down off it into a more open style. So I continue, even in such longish poems as I've written, to have, I hope, more than one interesting word per line. I'm quoting Auden kind of obliquely. He said that in writing songs for music, or in translating *libretti,* as he and Chester Kallman often did together, you must restrict yourself to at most one interesting word per line. A singer cannot sing anything complex—or, at any rate, the music, and the presence of the singer, the costume of the singer and the situation of the plot, are going to provide sufficient complexity, so that if the line says, "I love you," that'll be quite an adequate statement.

INTERVIEWER

How did the poem "The Writer" in your new book come about?

WILBUR

I expect it was done at some distance from the situation described in it. I've very, very seldom had the experience of encountering a raw event of some kind and immediately sitting down to write about it. The only time that ever happened to me that I can now recall was when I ran over a toad with a power mower, and for some reason was instantly ready

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to write about the toad and the associations of the toad. I must, indeed, have had a whole body of associations ready to which the dead toad became the center.

But in this case, heaven knows how many years before, the starling had in fact been trapped in that very room, and indeed that was the room in which my daughter wrote.... The poem tells the truth in general, but the chronology is probably not exact. People sometimes imagine that a rush of love for one's daughter might produce a poem. It's not that at all—it's that two ideas, two images come together, and then you've got something to work with.

INTERVIEWER

Did you think about how your daughter would react to the poem? Do you ever think about your audience?

WILBUR

I did think a little bit about how she would react, but that wasn't at all what guided me in my choice of words and of tone. Even when one's writing a poem about someone that close, and my daughter and I are as close as it's possible to be, I don't think a poem is a message. It's a kind of performance; it's a kind of machine of feeling which other people can use. If I had thought too very much about my daughter there would have been things which wouldn't have been necessary to say. But in the poem, in so far as I'm talking to my daughter, I'm talking to her in public and therefore in a fuller, more explanatory way, and producing something which I hope other people can appropriate to their own lives. I don't think I've admitted anything to the poem which is so peculiar as to leave the average reader feeling that he's excluded from that kind of experience.

Indeed, one thing about that little poem that I've noticed is that there are people, when I read it to an audience, who come trotting up and say: "I had a robin in my house last week and had all hell getting rid of it!" If the poem is successful (I hope it is), this is the case of a poem which is for-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tunate in fitting Robert Frost's formula concerning the material of poetry. I'm going to misquote it, but he said something like this: that the material of poetry ideally should be common in experience, uncommon in literature. Everybody's had birds in the house and wanted to get them out without their bashing their heads against the glass. And yet, I think this is the only poem about it I have read.

INTERVIEWER

Do you revise much?

WILBUR

No, I don't really have drafts. I do sometimes have false starts. Mostly I don't change my ground much, because usually a first line presents itself to me confidently and I go on from there. My revision consists mostly in refusing to put anything down until I think it will do; and then sometimes I will put a line down and I will scribble alternatives in the margin Emily Dickinson-fashion. And I don't keep notebooks, or a schedule, formally. Mostly I jot ideas on old envelopes and bits of paper.

INTERVIEWER

You were telling us over lunch about the way Yeats approached a poem. . . .

WILBUR

Oh, well, I was just saying that I thought he was an extraordinarily willed poet. He claimed that a poem often began, for him, as a musical phrase, but I doubt that much of his work was wafted toward him on wings of song. I don't know in what sense he was tone deaf (he said he was); I know he had a marvelous kinetic sense; I don't sense any privation of music in his poetry. But clearly he was a man of no facility at all, and it took a lot of cold forethought and ambition to make his books. I do believe that he wrote a lot of poems to fill out his individual volumes, because there's almost always a unity

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the individual volume. I think there are a lot of little poems which are outriders, as it were, destroyer-escorts of the big poems.

INTERVIEWER

Do you do anything like that when you put a book together? Look for a unifying theme?

WILBUR

No. This is ridiculous to say, because I have no want of respect for Yeats, but I would abhor doing that. It wouldn't seem spontaneous enough; it would seem too calculating, too much like merchandising. It would be for me; it wasn't for Yeats. Yeats could make himself do things, the way some poets can make themselves write occasional poems. If it's the anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, there are some poets who can write those. . . .

INTERVIEWER

The Bicentennial poet.

WILBUR

That's just exactly the last thing I could be. A publisher once had me down to New York and gave me lunch at the Plaza, and then over dessert said: "Well now, getting down to my idea. It seems to me it's many years since there's been a popular success like Stephen Vincent Benét's *John Brown's Body,* and we have an anniversary of Lincoln's death coming up, and if you could write a book-length poem about Lincoln, I could give you a $5,000 advance." I said: "Gee, it's been a nice lunch, but it's wasted on me. I can't do that kind of thing. The best I can do is to name to you the people whose long poem about Lincoln I might be interested to read," and I named some other people.

The other day I read, to my great amusement, that the same publisher offered the same deal to Auden, probably before he'd offered it to me. Can you imagine asking Auden to write a book like that on Lincoln?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEWER

You once said that no *one* poet influenced you most. Do other poets influence you? Do you ever read other poets before sitting down to write?

WILBUR

I don't want to do that. I know that all my life I've been reading Robert Frost, and sometimes that is visible. I don't want it to be. I try to get rid of the signs that show. But there have been, good heavens, outcroppings of Poe, involuntary ones. In that poem I wrote about the toad, about the time I was one-third into it, I had an odd feeling of having written a really resounding, splendid line; and I said to myself, "Good God, one shouldn't feel that way about one's poem. One shouldn't be so confident at this point." And I realized where I had gotten my confidence: I had borrowed two out of three adjectives from one of Poe's lines in "Dream-Land"! I think Yeats is catastrophic in this respect. If you become influenced by Yeats you do not sound like yourself. There's one poem of mine which I would have to throw out of a *Selected Poems*—perhaps there are two of them, that are too touched by Yeats, too affected by the fact that I've three times taught a seminar in Yeats. Yeats' poetry is gloriously abnormal, but if you teach it for a semester it commences to seem normal.

Still, it can be useful and safe to read someone like Robert Graves who, as John Holmes said, is a great starter. You read Graves and he reminds you how delightful poetry can be at its best, and what a fine game it is—and it makes you want to write a poem. Not, however, a poem by Robert Graves, but one of your own. I don't think I've ever sounded like Graves, but I get the nicest nudges out of him.

INTERVIEWER

Are you involved in any group of poets like the one you used to have with John Ciardi and others?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILBUR

No, no group. Every now and then there are certain people to whom I show poems, and who show poems to me: Bill Meredith, Bill Smith, John Brinnin, and Cal Lowell, when he's around—we aren't in the same place at present. But that's just one-on-one. The last time I found myself involved in anything groupy was about seven years ago when Stephen Spender was staying at Wesleyan and certain people on the Wesleyan faculty were interested in reading poems to each other. Stephen, with his usual generosity—of course this wasn't part of any deal he'd signed on to do—joined the group. I suppose there were five or six meetings. We'd go around in a circle and everybody would read at least one poem.

One evening Stephen invited I.A. Richards to come, and Richards had not understood the character of the invitation. He hadn't realized he was going to have to listen to a lot of people read poems, one after the other, and then discuss them. And as soon as that became clear, he did the most glorious thing. He simply stood up and said, "Oh no, no, no, I'm sorry, no, I'm sorry, I can't. Good night! Good night!" and out he went. He didn't have any evidence that any particular, horrible poem was going to be read, but he thought the chances were pretty good and he didn't see why, at his age, he had to sit and listen to it.

INTERVIEWER

What do you have planned for the future?

WILBUR

Well, I don't think I can resist it too much longer—my wife's bullying me about writing some sustained prose books for children. I have to write *one,* anyway. All the time my children were growing up I told them great sagas about sets of characters who went through successive adventures, and I did take one of them and write a little book about him, *Loudmouse.* It's full of capitalized speeches which entitle the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

children or the reader to shout—they like that. Children love a moment of anarchy; they don't like sustained anarchy. They love violence in that sense, too, and too many children's books don't give them any of it, I think. Nothing scary, nothing disorderly, not enough that's crazy. So many children's books which come out are really just big picture-books, with a little bit of text, and bright-colored pictures of generous-bosomed, middle-European women in peasant costume cooking things. That's not the sort of thing that delights the heart of a child. I don't know who thinks all those Hungarian cooks are a delight to children.

INTERVIEWER

Are there what one could call advantages to being a poet?

WILBUR

Well, one is allowed enormous license in behavior, one is forgiven everything, one can look as one likes, and one can travel around the country reading the same poems over and over; whereas if a scholar or critic wanted to travel around the country he'd have to write a number of fresh lectures, you see. You get to see a lot of the country on the same old material this way, and I like that. I'm being frivolous, I suppose. I don't know what disadvantages there are. I can't think of anything I'd rather do, hard as it is, isolating as it is, and unpleasant as it is to go stale and dead as you do periodically.

INTERVIEWER

How do you feel then? And how do you overcome the dry spells, and your feelings about them?

WILBUR

Dead and guilty and ashamed; however, I say to myself, for what I suppose would now be the fiftieth time, this too will pass, you will write something again; and that helps a tiny bit. It doesn't help enough.

ELLESA CLAY HIGH
HELEN McCLOY ELLISON

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Silent Movie

David Polk

One must have heroes, which is to say, one must invent them. And they become real through our envy, our devotion.

James Salter

1. **Midnight, In Her Drawing Room**

As she enters, it all but caresses her, the oval mirror, the luminous, tightly drawn curtains, and her shadow, an anonymous lady-in-waiting who brushes the snow from her heart-shaped fur collar.

Unbuttoning her wrap . . . it is her alerted breasts we think of, the french phrase for "tender buttons." Her unstudied gestures . . . preoccupied, she fidgets leisurely with the crease in her tailored sleeve. She has probably never even glanced at that high, ornate ceiling . . . her shadows magnified there, and as she pours a sherry, their waves of reversals.

The flakes disappear into the rich carpet forever. Its pattern is floral, entwined and sleeping . . . we are absorbed here and there by an initiation of rhythm, then the eye is blocked or diverted. A black rose is pushed gently to the edge of a crystalline bowl. Like a school girl she licks the drop of water from her finger.

The chaise is white. Her hair is white as she touches it into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pristine symmetries. . . as she gazes not at herself, but into the mirror's bevelled margins, where highlights of our past embarrass like hollow pearls, and for the first time we sense the possibility of a man. And we desire to be him, for him, inadvertently and British, to break open this language of the lounge.

"The destruction of a whole way of life in relentless sunlight."

riding across an African heath
on his favorite horse
he recalls her decorated eyes

2. **Midnight, In Her Drawing Room**

Over the reunion sherry, she confronts him, insistently. The camera, like a messenger, rushes from her face to his, and returns, an anxious go-between. She is defiant, she paces. He is evasive, she is dragging him back into the scene where he leaves her. She frowned this way, gave over and wept. She weeps, she is overcome, is drowsy recalling her anguish, but that was years ago. Finally, she had presumed a future he couldn't imagine. Posed as a simple question, it was not a weapon, even if twisted violently, it could not have penetrated his uniform. He had staggered but quickly righted himself. And soon, dumbfounded by his own vulnerability, he was again inert. . . .

We smile sheepishly, we have been reading his mind, or he is leading us through a familiar exhibition. . . and at this distance, for a moment, we recognize ourselves. In truth, he remembers nothing but the pain of that scene, and has guarded it, he is a soldier. It is abstracted now, and he feels what he takes to be courage rise before its predictable assault. His hand reaches hers, and locks in place across the white marble table. His years of searching. . . his eyes, forbidding and manically accurate, startle us.

Silent words, "Don't you see, the half-witted native bearer led us to bad water," are held on the screen for what must be a full minute, and beneath them her "Oh!" We know the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

words are intended to calm us temporarily, but her ear has pressed to the heart of his story. Her face, stretched taut to the edges of the screen, floods down upon us, relentless, incredulous, then limp with compassion. We, too, sense now that he himself rode the horse to death in search of the lost mine. He has returned with nothing. He looks away. Obviously she knows everything.

And he must kill her now. We see it come to him as if a ship had run aground. It is the scene which will keep his name alive, there will be poster stills on our walls forty years hence. His eyes narrow down as if within some implausible memory. In the magazines that year, he described her hair as the blue-white of winter stars.

She was the mirror of a generation. The women who were picked out in crowds, as one entered a party, had studied her mouth the way one does an uncut diamond, ecstatic among its discontinuities. Across the light she spoke to them, she needed only the one word of her body, her naked face.

3. **Midnight**

And he killed her. From that silent moment, it was cartoonlike, and Freudian, on down through several embarrassing afterthoughts. We rise and fumble for our coats. The credits are being lowered awkwardly, the white words, line by line, descending before his heavily mascaraed face. He clutches a locket to his prison flannel, weeping.

He will drink, and of course, curse her. In eight months, a year, the studio will drop him. He will be known everywhere, and no one will touch him. He will see her enshrined in the serious prose of the Depression's finest journalists.

A few months before the war overtakes Washington, he begins a new film in the first sophisticated South American studio. The papers there spoke of the film world's anticipation, of the honor his creative presence is. He is interviewed, his eyes clear, confidently searching the lenses of the news cameras. He has lost twenty pounds; the bourbon had loosened his jaw line like the belly of a fish, but here is the taut, athletic etching of the smile one saw in his early walk-ons.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Outside the new hotel, the civil guard confer knowledgeably with the doormen. The small crowd at the steps is nonchalant, distracted.

And that night in her bed an Indian prostitute, "a mother of four," will stab him with an icepick, following what she calls "his unrecognizable attacks." His hair was beautiful she tells them, "night black and really the way it looked." His face is turned down in the pillow behind her.

4. **Midnight**

In the beginning he is like a guest who stays on leisurely, hours, daybreaks precious to her, though he must always have spent this way in that world which fathered him. . . creating himself. . . whose avenues run on even now, where the knowledge of his absence is growing, where, in the celebrated bars and cafes he is spoken of in easy, mock-heroic jibes, where he sat even-eyed with the countess, a translator of the occult poets, the waiter hesitant to interrupt them, resisting their heated momentum.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ross Shideler

What My Father Knows

My father raised me to know
that I am not different
from anyone else. This knowledge
makes me respond to you all
with doubt.
If you dreamed
as an eight year old
of shoveling coal into a furnace
and the furnace exploded
blowing you sky high,
and you saw from up there
while hanging to a stove pipe
the entire city, then
came down slowly
to the basement again,
why don't you wish
to be a bird as I do?
And assuming
that you discovered around fourteen
that your parents were nice
but not your own
and you watched every night
for a starship to arrive,
why aren't you aware of how alien
we all are to this planet?

Perhaps most confusing
is that I know you have spent
as many days and nights
as I have fearing death
and dreaming of a private escape
or of a discovery to save everyone,
yet still you seem to forget
what heroes and heroines we are
to get up every morning,
to go to bed every night.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

William Leo Coakley

The Marriage of Dionysus and Apollo

When Dionysus and Apollo met,
the gods were angry (the goddesses were sleeping)
that two such equals and such opposites
should join together, to the general peril.

Love so unbridled would disturb the state
of earth and heaven: no one will be safe—
"Safety," said Dionysus, "is a sin";
"it would offend the body," sang Apollo;

and they continued at their amorous play,
setting the nosey gods to doze and babble:
Dionysus fuddled them, it was his way;
Apollo, turning from his pleasure, dazzled.

They took a day to savour their delight,
a night to kiss (the kiss, of course, a French one);
mes dieux, it was a week before they lay
so deep within each other that they melted.

They gave themselves themselves, it was a marriage
that needed no review of sanctification,
the clergy (who were not invented)
were not invited to the celebration.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Love has a way of leading one's thoughts astray:
whether to choose contentment or desire—
their bodies were animal, the gods decided,
and animals are attracted to the fire.

Every animal, man, or god,
after sex, sings in his blood—
they had been down to earth for contemplation
and even gods admit to imitation.

They sang, in harmony, their revelling song
and earth beneath them heard the noise:
it had the heavenly sound of manly lovers,
light in its burden, rough in its undersong.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Barry Yourgrau

Two Bears

A man rents two bears. One of the bears wears a little blue fez; on his vest is his name: 'Bruno.' The other bear wears a red fez. His vest says 'Hugo.' The man takes the bears home with him.

In his living room, the man pulls off his coat and frees the tails of his shirt and gets a beer from the ice box. He asks the bears what they'll have to drink, but they shake their heads. He sinks back in the armchair and lets out a long sigh and flexes his stockinged feet. After a while he leans forward with his elbows on his knees and he looks at the bears. He asks if either one of them is up for sex with him. The bears stop playing with the hoop they brought along. They glance at each other darkly under creased brows. The man pulls out his wallet. "I'll make it worth your while," he says. The bears look at the money. The bear named Hugo finally shakes his head. The other bear, Bruno, glances at Hugo. He thinks to himself, and he shrugs. He takes the money and pushes it carefully under his blue fez. He follows the man into the bedroom. He shuts the door.

The bear named Hugo stands at the fireplace. He taps the hoop up and down. Then he lets it fall. He pads over to the television. He looks at the grey, blank screen, at the row of knobs. He wanders over to the armchair. He lowers himself into it and lounges back, gingerly. He lifts up the beer can and sniffs it, uncertainly, under his black olive nose. From the bedroom, he hears sounds. He hears the other bear give a sudden, snarling growl. He hears the man making hoarse, fierce noises.

The bedroom door opens. The bear scrambles out of the chair. The man comes out. He finishes adjusting the fit of his pants. He strolls by the bear, into the kitchen, snapping his fingers. The bear named Bruno shuffles out. He comes shuffling stiffly over to the fireplace. The other bear watches

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him. When Bruno finally raises his eyes, they are ashamed and vulnerable, ready to take offense. The two bears look at each other. There is a long pause of silence. Then suddenly the bear named Hugo starts sputtering. Bruno watches him. He pushes him in the chest. Hugo turns with the blow and hangs onto the mantlepiece with one paw and clutches his low belly with the other. He shivers and sputters with stifled laughter, his vest and red fez jiggling, his eyes squeezed shut, his hands quivering. A big, embarrassed grin spreads across Bruno's snout. He glances over his shoulder. He swats Hugo on the arm. Hugo quakes uncontrollably. Bruno looks down at the floor, grinning. Then he takes off his blue fez. He holds it cupwise in his paws and gazes at it.

At last Hugo turns back from the mantle. He wipes his tearing eyes, shaking his head, still chuckling. He sees the fez in Bruno's paws. He looks at it. He falls silent. The two bears stand head to head, in silence, gazing at the money in the fez.

From the kitchen come the sounds, of ice, liquid, whistling.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gordon Carrega

Uncle

My nephew stands at the door. I pretend to be asleep but it's no use. "Uncle," he calls and I feel that identity wrenched out of my tired nerves. I open my eyes and look into his sleepy face, puzzled with questions as he stands before me in his red pajamas. "Tell me again, Uncle." I breathe deeply and ask, "Tell you what?" "Where you came from." Once again I explain, whispering in the cathedral of his parents' sleep. He listens, checking this information against what he already knows. "Uncle." "Yes." "How come you have no children?" Again I explain. Now he stands by my suitcase and stares suspiciously into the disarray of clothes. "I bought the suitcase at the Goodwill for a couple of bucks," I say. "And that coat," I say, pointing at my winter coat hanging on the closet door, "I also bought that at the Goodwill." "For a couple of bucks?" he asks. "Yes," I reply. "Uncle." "Yes." "This is the guest room, right?" "Yes, it is the guest room." "Then you are a guest, aren't you Uncle?" "Yes I am a guest," I reply. "Uncle, I remember the last time you came here." "Yes," I reply. "And I remember the time before that. I am growing up, Uncle. Good night." He goes out and enters his room next door. When I think he is asleep I get up and pack my things. I am walking quietly past his room when the door opens. "Uncle are you leaving?" "Yes I am leaving." He walks behind me and stands at the front door as I step out into the cold night. "Uncle." I turn to face him one last time. "I opened the door when you arrived, remember Uncle? It was late. It was just like this except you had arrived and now you are leaving. I took your bag and led you to the guest room, remember Uncle?" "Yes I remember."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poems by Abigail Luttinger

A True Story

I am never getting married or having babies
after I saw what happened to these dogs we had
named Max and Phoebe. One day we heard this
terrible yelping and poor Phoebe was screeching
like anything because Max had mated with her
and he couldn't get out of her tiny behind.
Daddy had to go out with a pail of water to throw
on them (he's a Doctor) and Mommy made us wait in
the dining room only I could see through the window
they were rolling over in the zinnias and it was
awful. Then poor Phoebe had 2 puppies and 1 died
and her nipples just dragged around on the floor
all swollen and dusty and then the other one died
and Phoebe got worms and we gave her away to the maid
but we kept Max.

when the cat had kittens in the cellar Max ate them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My Mother Was Always Dressed

She wore lipstick and powder
and her face smelled good.
one winter she wore a bearskin coat
and a purple hat from Guatemala
with a tassel.

the summer she wore a bathing suit
she stood me in front of her
and was photographed.
I look at us, squinting into the sun,
her body hidden behind mine.

once, in the gloom of the bath-house,
I peeked at her naked.
her nipples were dark and alien
and she smelled like soup.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Town Like Kansas

Diane Vreuls

I stopped smoking, it was McClaid. From hyperventilation. Take one step you're wafted on top of the shrubbery. You lose your hands and feet, then your head just bounces away. Except with McClaid you are paired. For protection. Me and a girl named Beryl. McClaid would give us a dose and send us down flagstones. A pretty walk. An English garden. We'd hold hands and float towards the hedge. "Stop us, Beryl," I'd holler. On a good day she'd anchor left, we'd tumble and roll. Pull at each other like taffy saying "sh. . . sh. . . " and try to make it erect before visitors came around the corner. We could hear their voices approach. Mustn't frighten somebody's mother. I'd grab a spiky bush and pull myself up, hang on bleeding, Beryl bracing herself against me. We stood in the thorns while the visitors ambled by.

"Has it been half an hour?"

We tried to think of an hour and divide it by two.

"No, do it by minutes. Think of a minute thirty times," said Beryl. No use.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"See that tree? It must be half an hour from here to that tree."

"It's going to rain, let's go back. It will take that long to get back."

We got back by sailing, tack sideways off the wall, come about and blow back to the brick. He'd take our blood pressure, temperature—God, how we longed for a fever. McClaid would take you off the drug if you ran one, it was the only way.

I could always run fever by drinking. A form of dessication. Now I've stopped, my tissues are drowning, my speech is impaired with saliva, I sound drunk. At bars I order Kreiger, a game played with four green dice. I am resurrecting my organs, one by one. First the lungs, now the liver, kidneys, they were black and swollen, they're shrinking to pink. All this time I've relied on my appendix. It was doing all the work, pumping gas, pumping blood; when I'm fully reconstituted, I'll have it removed. What a reward for an organ, its own plastic bottle, with thanks. My little döppelganger, stolen from a wombat, you had to go. I'm enlarging my tract.

I'm twelve days into the fast. When I swallow the liquid yeast my body lights up like Juno, the Transparent Lady in the Cleveland Health Museum. Systems analysis. The bubble travels through the intestines like a hotwheels car on its track. The thirty dollar layout you can never get back in the box. You should run. I run a mile in the morning, another at night, it's society. Everyone's running. We pass on the sidewalk and grunt. We wear thirty-five dollar sneakers and sweat bandages on our brows. Blue shorts, rockplaster sweatpants, coarse salty hair fixed in ripples blowing behind you, even when you sit. In the supermarket, mothers admonish their youngsters not to stare at my feet. I buy juice and keep running, I'm trying to deliver the message, the pavement echoes as I hit, a deafening boom boom boom. Even walking it echoes. I grow lighter and lighter, still echoing in the cement.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In December I gave up talking. First I decided not to swear, all the other words went. Who needs them? A bad habit, you're open to libel, to lies. Someone else taught me this language, what would mine have been? We don't all speak English, oh no, my lost dialect, let me find you before I'm toothless, with a yellow coated tongue. First the term of silence like Lent before Hallelujah, I've buttoned my lips, thrown the key away, lie down on my rug. I read an interview with a student who was dumb for a month. "What was it like?" "How did you signal?" "What did you learn?" He couldn't answer.

I thought silence would alter my habits. With the family, with friends. They don't notice, they're interrupting each other. Only one change: I don't answer the phone, no more junk calls, no new mispronunciations of my name. I miss the offers of photographs, wall to wall rugging. Read the want ads for telephone sales and think of applying, you don't have to travel, what's wrong with me, I like the phone. The power of dialing emergencies into a hundred kitchens. The women answer breathless, subdued, waiting for you to tell them of accidents on the playground, their husband totalled the car. You can say anything. Not me, I let it go.

Swimming pools and churches, that's where you stay when you're giving up, or giving up things. I've built a shrine in the shrubbery. I listen to Talking Books. When I was running from here to Kipton it occurred to me: Beryl. She was in Observation. For officially hating her baby but I'm certain it was her skirt. Gypsy stripes. Too much for the rural parish where her husband put her in thatch. It brightened the ward, that skirt. McClaid had us switched to narcosis, fifteen pills at a time. They keep you asleep for weeks, rouse you just enough to swallow. On Sundays you were weighed. The Nigerian nurse's aide hoisted Beryl over her shoulder onto the scale. She'd never undressed her, tucked her skirt and shoes back to bed. Beryl died of the treatment. Drugs backed up in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her system, she was rattling in the wrong language, the aide knew no English, pressed the emergency button and pointed towards the shoes sticking out of the sheets. When it was my turn I resisted and woke up week to week on the scale. I didn't try English, Beryl.

I've given up reading mysteries. Novels went next, I never believed the quotes. Biographies, science fiction, the photograph on the dust jacket smoking the prop. A transvestite, wearing prose. In his or her other life is Connecticut, I'm not fooled. I'm sorry about all those books. They built a new library building. We are all to report at nine, take as many books as we can across the square. How many books can I carry? I've only one arm. I used up the left one in high school, that shoulder is two inches low. Cash and carry: you go to college four years, take away only what fits in beer cartons. Why should we organize like ants, with some papery white thing for baggage? We could line up across the square, pass along volumes and fill the gazebo. Use the new building for mattress storage, it's healthy to sleep on the floor.

Last night I gave up sex, a political decision. Maria will not leave the convent for Baron von Trapp. She is up on the mountaintop singing. What is the highest point in Kansas? We're speaking of elevation, don't calculate from the sea. There are mountains under water, I saw the map. Don't stick in a foot off Easter Island, the dropoff's 12,000 feet. I'm trimming gesture. Obedience training for hands. When they stopped the narcosis cold turkey, I thought I was changing into a leopard and called up our Embassy for help. They misunderstood my accent and telegrammed Illinois. My father came and took me to Stratford, do a few capitals, why waste the fare? His first voyage abroad, don't knock him. He tried to come to my rescue, no one else has. After four husbands it's clear I should try for excellence elsewhere. Have a porch sale. Pack only the juicer. I'm moving to Kansas, pick up a cyclone collar with the money I've saved off drink. It's perfect

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for a narcosis. Farming mushrooms. A dormitory for bats. I've taken to running in place, my hair flowing backwards like smoke. Beryl, Beryl, I'm learning to speak in Swahili. I'm learning to play the organ, I'll teach your child.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eight Poems by David Ignatow

"I Saw A Leaf. . ."

I saw a leaf flying in the opposite direction from the ground but there was no wind. Now how could that be, I asked myself. It was a dead leaf, shriveled and brittle looking, one of the many hundreds that were dropping to the ground all around me from off the trees in the woods beside my house. Puzzled for an explanation, thinking perhaps an updraft had caught the leaf and sailed it into the sky, I watched it grow smaller and smaller to the eye, and soon I could not make it out at all. I shrugged and entered my house and closed the door behind me. I could imagine the house beginning to take off too and I sat down as if to pin it to the ground, and as I seated myself there was a short tapping on the door. I was expecting company. I approached and opened the door. A single leaf lay on the doorstep at my feet.

The Conversation

I am the chair he sits on at the desk to type his poems and letters and comments to himself and others, a strange man. He can fart while typing the most soulful lines and stink me up. I'm used to it, and anyway what can I do to stop him or protest? I creak, I bend, I roll from beneath him and promptly he jerks me forward toward the desk, a stern taskmaster he is.

What I'd like to do is to write my own poems about him but there I sit in front of the desk and typewriter in his absence and simply contemplate the idea. My two arms rest at my side and refuse to move upwards to the keys, but what would I write about except about being a chair, previously the side of a tree trunk? but I should take that as an omen of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some good since he does find me of value, yet think of what will happen to me when I'm used up, worn out and falling apart. Well, what do you think will happen to him when he becomes too old to type? So we have something in common, don't we?

I wish he would recognize that and stop farting on me so that at least I could respect myself as he respects himself, if he does. We're equal in the end, aren't we, and he should know, being so smart as to know exactly what I'm thinking now. I don't even have my private thoughts hidden from others which shows you how much a slave I am. Does he have pity on me at all?

Oh, I do.

In The Sunlight

I hold a pair of scissors over my head and open and close the blades to cut off the air from its source. I lower the scissors to the ground and snap at the surface to punish it for its errors, such as grass, trees, flowers and fruits. I turn the scissors point towards myself and snap the blades open and shut at my nose, my eyes, my mouth, my ears. I have to be angry at myself too who lives off earth and air.

Why is there hurt and sorrow? Scissors, cut them off from me. Scissors, whose fine steel gleams in the sunlight like a most joyful smile, why am I not like you, instead, since I must give pain? I do not want to feel it in others. I do not want to feel it in myself. I do not want to be man, cutting through grass and flesh in the sunlight.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I Am Plastering Myself

I am plastering myself into the wall of an apartment house. I want to secure myself against any further wandering or misuse of myself. As a part of the wall of a new apartment house I can rest assured of serving the cause of shelter and other humane considerations. It will be a pleasure to listen to the sounds of music and talk piercing the wall on a pleasant night or day. I also can listen in on some heavy problems and, of course, those intimate pleasures reserved only for couples in the privacy of their bedrooms. Am I plastering myself into the wall for that purpose, really? Then I will live a long and exciting life, simply by standing upright.

Now I wonder whether I should invite a companion to stay with me, a woman I could trust who would enjoy my pleasures and approve. Together we could listen in on others while ourselves remaining secreted. I hurry the job of plastering myself in, not waiting to call or write to the woman of my choice. She will know easily enough, I believe, what I want of her when she hears what I have done and will simply do the same, a few bricks above or below me. It really doesn't matter. I'm indifferent as to where, just so long as we stand together in the same wall.

"Why Can't I Be . . ."

Why can't I be an empty house falling into decay, unaware of myself? Why can't I be the sky empty or the river flowing into the sea senselessly or an empty plate or knife or fork, whatever is but does not feel itself? If I were the grass that covers the graves I could forget being human. I want it taken away. The sun is sparkling on the waters. Why should I not be the sparkle rather than the eyes that show me the difference in myself. Shine upon me, sun, so that I become lit up like a sunbeam.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I Came Upon The Poem. . ."

I came upon the poem the way the hunter discovers the animal in the bush, with shock. I leveled my sights and was about to shoot it when it spoke. "I'm here to be discovered. Place a leash around my neck and we'll travel together to your house." I lowered my weapon, amazed. The animal stepped out from its hiding and stood in front of me, waiting for me to recover. We then walked back to my house where I sprawled in my chair, unbelieving, the animal lying at my feet and looking up at me, not with adoration or servility but as an observer of another world than its own.

I thought, if I should tell others about it they would think me touched. So I decided that when they came to visit me or I them I would have this animal at my side. It might ask for food or leave to do its toilet, and all those gathered in the room would stare at it in horror, then at me, then back at the creature in disbelief, then back at me, finally to burst out, Was that speech they had heard from this animal at my feet? I'd have to nod solemnly, very much amused. Yes, speech, and the rest of the evening would go by in an uproar of excitement, delight, fear, delight, fear.

"I Wonder Whether Two Trees. . ."

I wonder whether two trees standing side by side really need each other. How then did they spring up so close to one another? Look how their branches touch and sway in each other's path. Notice how at the very top, though, they keep the space between them clear, which is to say that each still does his or her thinking and there is the sun that warms them together.

Do their roots entangle with one another down there? Do they compete for nourishment in that fixed space they have to share between them, and if so, is it reflected in their stance towards one another, both standing pretty straight and tall,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

touching only with their branches. Neither tree leans towards or away from the other. I could be a social device to keep decorum between them in public. Perhaps their culture requires it and perhaps also this touching of branches to further deceive their friends and associates as to the relationship between them, while what goes on beneath the surface is dreadful, indeed, roots gnarled and twisted or cut off from their sources by the other and shrunken into lifelessness, with other roots flung out desperately in a direction from the entanglement, seeking their own private independent sources. As they stand together, they present to the eye a picture of benign harmony, and that may be so in that both are dedicated to the life they lead.

The Explorer

I have this mountain to climb
and no one to stop me,
this dangerous mountain
of glaciers and gaunt cliffs,
and I will climb it for the sake
of the living. Climb, then,
they call out, and die.
Climb, then, I answer softly,
and live.
I am about to begin.

I am reaching for possession.
Climb, then, they whisper, and live.
Climb, then, I reply strongly, and die.

My joy is in the trees and grass,
the rocks and glacial face of the mountain.
My joy is skyward, my life is the opening
of heaven. I have placed my foot
on the mountain that I have discovered
in my own brain. I am the joyful man.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reading The News—Keeping Informed

Stephen Minot

I read the *New York Times* each morning. It's a part of the breakfast ritual. Hot coffee and the smell of printer's ink. I depend on the regularity of these pleasures. When the paper went on strike, I suffered from constipation.

Some of my friends prefer *Newsweek*. The format of a magazine is, they argue, easier to handle. It doesn't flop all over the place, they say. Pages don't fall to the floor. I tell them that they must have short arms. The morning newspaper is for long-armed people. It's a little joke we share.

I have other friends who read *Time* regularly. They prefer the style. Breezier. More distinctive, they say. More imaginative. Or so they imagine.

And then there's one of our group who swears by the *Manchester Guardian*, overseas edition. His wife does too. An odd couple in some ways, but they give us a fresh slant on world events. They help us to understand what others are thinking.

We vary in our sources, but we all keep up on current

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

events. That's something we share. We and our wives are conversant with every major development. We read and we discuss. We vary in our political persuasions just as we do in taste—some cautious, some tending toward the flamboyant. Like reading the *Manchester Guardian,* overseas edition. But being informed is something we all share. It's a moral obligation with us.

* * * *

On my last trip to London I arrived in the early morning, Greenwich time. My inner clock said it was the middle of the night. The human mind is not equipped to deal with two times. I was left befuddled. To make matters worse, my room was not ready. I had to wait in a little hallway they used for a lobby. The weather was unusually hot for London so they had left both the front and back doors open. I sat there half drowsing, trying to pass the time by reading the *London Times.*

England was going through one of the worst labor crises since the general strike of 1926. I was reading an editorial sharply criticizing the situation. But I found myself interrupted repeatedly by a distant whining. At first I thought it was a dog. Finally I realized that it was a woman's voice. It was apparently coming from some apartment across the alley.

As I listened, the moaning and whining rose into a series of shrieks. She cried out "No!" several times and the word would end in a scream. Then it subsided again to that moaning and whining. Alarmed, I asked the lady at the desk whether something should be done about it and she nodded emphatically. "It's the town council what done it," she said. "They've brought all sorts of down-and-outers into that old building there, and then the bloody Socialists pay them for doing nothing at all. It's a shame, it is. A moral shame."

* * * *

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I hate the nights. I have to play games with myself to get to sleep. Sometimes I close my eyes and recall a scene from my adolescence: sitting with others on a grassy bank above the tennis courts. I must have been twelve or so then. Whenever we stopped playing and lay about there, chatting, some old fellow would come out and start rolling the courts. The heavy roller was rusty and made a terrible sound, a whining and moaning, but not one thought to oil it. Actually, there was such a soothing quality to the soft, sea-scented air, the sun, the murmur of voices, that the dismal sound of the roller lingers in my mind more like a melody.

* * * *

I travel a lot. I've seen more world capitals than I can count. Each one has its own character. No two alike. Paris, for example, is detestable. Toronto, on the other hand, is rather manageable. They have trolleys. Also the lake. You can always figure out where you are in Toronto. London is civil. That's worth a lot. Tokyo is servile on the outside and hostile on the inside. Bangkok is harried. The place has been destroyed by automobiles. Stockholm. . . Stockholm is strangely unsettling.

Two odd things happened to me in Stockholm. First, I met my sister's son there. It was a chance meeting on the street. A bit of a shock for both of us, the unexpectedness of it. He had deserted the army during the Vietnam war and landed in Sweden. It seems that he renounced his citizenship in a moment of political passion, so now he is stateless. Stuck in Sweden. He hates the winters.

The other strange event was like a bad dream. Decidedly unsettling. I had spent much of the night trying to get to sleep and was woken abruptly in the gray of dawn by a thunderous rattle and the beating of wings. I thought I was in another nightmare. I discovered, however, that it was a seagull. I had left a carton of milk on the hotel window ledge and this starving bird was attacking it. I don't know if he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

actually drank the milk, but he made a terrible racket and a mess of the carton.

Stockholm is filled with these birds. I won't go back there. If I can help it.

* * * *

It was only last week that I drifted off to sleep—finally—by imagining myself on that grassy bank above the tennis courts having a lemonade. The distant cry of gulls, the murmur of conversation, the moan and whine of that old roller. We congregated there before lunch and again in the late afternoon after the matches. The conversation was informed and spirited. The rise of the fascists in Germany was much in the news then and of course no one seriously defended them. There were some, however, who felt that Mussolini was of better character, had a grander vision. And then there were those who believed Chamberlain had defused the entire crisis. I can't remember the exact arguments; what remains in my memory is the sound of human voices and the occasional ripple of laughter. These are permanent.

* * * *

The other day a young man handed me a flyer stating that the corporation for which I work is guilty of racism and sexism. He clutched me by the arm, urging me to read it right there on the sidewalk. So I did.

"What do you say to that?" he asked me.

"Listen," I told him, "it's much worse than you think."

* * * *

My best friend's daughter used to give me a lot of grief. The same age as my own daughter, she started reading a full year before ours and soon was two grades ahead. The old stereotype of the studious girl just didn't apply to her. She

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was beautiful and excelled in ballet. And then she became president of the eighth-grade class. We never made comparisons out loud, of course, but it was difficult to deal with. I kept telling my wife that there must be a chink somewhere. Well, last summer at fifteen she drowned herself. I should have guessed. I had read two separate articles on the strains endured by over-achievers. And soon as I heard, I saw at once how it had all happened. But of course I felt terrible—all those years of secretly downgrading my own daughter.

* * * *

My wife and I have had our share of crises. Only last winter she had a growth on her neck and we went through the agony of waiting for the operation which would determine whether it was benign or cancerous. It took a long time to schedule a hospital room. On the morning of the operation it was dark, windy, and sleeting. I had to be out of town, but I left word to be called as soon as they had word. As I waited, the wind moaned and whined outside the motel.

But I hardly noticed the weather. It's easy to block that kind of thing out. I just sat there with my eyes shut and imagined myself back on that grassy bank, basking in the sun, listening to that old man roll the courts. It was the first summer I was allowed beer. I must have been seventeen then. It was a special pleasure being accepted as a fellow adult—old enough to drink beer and talk about the kind of things which fill an August by the sea. All this came a bit early for me because by then it was 1943 and the adult men were off in the swamps fighting the Japanese or being cut to ribbons in the Italian operation. I was lucky—just waiting to be called. I read a lot of poetry then. And I kept up with the news. It was without question one of the most idyllic periods of my life.

* * * *

I don't want my daughter to go to some rural, Edenic col-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lege like Smith or Swarthmore. I've urged her to consider the University of Chicago and Columbia, with N.Y.U. as an anchor. Ours is, I keep reminding her, an urban age. I want her to be confronted directly by life.

* * * *

In my circle, we talk mostly about current events. We represent various political views, of course, but we share a respect for the basic facts. Back during the Vietnam war, for example, friendships were a bit strained by our differing attitudes toward our government's right to be there doing the things it was doing. But we all agreed on the fact that the city of Saigon was inexcusably corrupt. The massage parlors, the brothels, the black market—it was a bad scene. Evidence from *Time, Newsweek,* the *New York Times,* and even the *Manchester Guardian* concurred on this. One of us would report an example or a statistic he had read about and then another would top it, saying genially, "Listen, it's much worse than that. The *Times* said. . . ."

* * * *

The other day a *Times* editorial pointed out that just before a regime falls it goes through a period of moral decay—heavy drinking and all that. They cited Saigon and Phnom Penh, and from an earlier decade the last days of Berlin and Mussolini's Rome. An interesting point, that. Perhaps alcoholic consumption could be described as a kind of barometer.

I should say *public* consumption, however. There are plenty of people who control their habits and that's not the same at all. My father, for example. He wasn't a public drinker. In fact, he kept it very private. He owned and managed a large public relations firm with skill and took pride in the fact that he never missed a day of work. Publicly he was known to take nothing but gingerale and bitters.

But at home he was different. In the evenings with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shades pulled he drank straight gin from a water tumbler—no ice and no mix. My mother was dead, so I was the only person who knew. I would put the phone in the wastebasket and tuck my best sweater around it. When his friends called, they concluded that he was out. Actually he would be sitting there at the dining room table staring into space and talking to me. His views were dark.

He brooded about all kinds of imagined sins ranging from immoral business transactions and imagined infidelities from the past to what he described as his political cowardice. He rated that high. He had the notion that the world's moral structure was crumbling because of his own refusal to face its problems. He hated the nights.

Still, he never missed a day of work. You can't call a man an alcoholic when he doesn't let his habit interfere with his work. As for me, I drink only when disturbed or uneasy about the world situation. I've learned from my father to get up early and face the day. When he died he left me a fine collection of books and an abiding sense of moral responsibility. Also a subscription to the *Times*.

* * * *

A friend said to me the other day that the world is in worse shape than it ever has been. "Perhaps," I said, not agreeing with him at all but not wishing to argue the point. Were I in a debating mood, I would have told him that if we are indeed sliding backward, our standards change at the same rate so that in effect there is no change. Take corruption, for example. We used to apply that word to what we now call a minor indiscretion. It's like inflation. As long as our standards keep pace with our practice, who is the loser? The same with misfortune. We're tougher today, less naïve. But you can't argue logic with a man whose teenage daughter has just drowned herself.

* * * *

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I read in the *Times* the other day a special report by a David DeVoss about men who had been kept in so-called tiger cages by our allies, the South Vietnamese government, for three years. During the three years, they had not stood up once. "It is not really proper to call them men any more," he wrote. "'Shapes' is a better word." Even now, apparently they are incapable of standing erect. "They move like crabs, skittering across the hospital floor on buttocks and palms."

There was a photograph too. Very unsettling. It lodged itself in my memory like a fishbone in the throat. I found it difficult to sleep that night. Even after Scotch which I drank without water or ice. I tried recalling summer days by the sea, but somehow the moan and whine of that ceaseless roller sounded more like human voices and I felt as if I were drowning.

It was almost dawn before I discovered what had been bothering me. That phrase from the article—"They move like crabs, skittering across the floor. . . ." It had a familiar ring to it. From where? Ezra Pound, perhaps, or Eliot?

I got up out of bed and put on my robe. It was chilly. I looked through some of the books my father had left me. I found it finally. Eliot. One of his earlier poems. "I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas."

I drifted off to sleep right after that. I may not have the best memory in the world, but I know what to do with the printed word.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Diana Der Hovanessian

The Bottomless Eye

"Please don't give me any more doodads.
My eye with the hole has healed."
Aunt Berta—

The word for childish greed
in Armenian is the same
as for an eye with a hole.
After years of collecting,
adding, rolling-up,
stuffing trinkets
into trinket boxes
all the locks snap open.
She discovers her eyes
well up and water
at flea markets.
She sneezes, sneezes.
Aunt Berta tries to empty
the bottomless,
makes presents of
dangling, tinkling
bangles. There are
never enough takers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The chairman of the charity
bazaar whose motto is
"nothing so pleasurable
as elimination. Give."
forgets to pick up
Berta's contribution.
So do her nieces. She
phones Goodwill
Industries
waits for the truck
closing both eyes
against the colored
Tiffany glass
lamp that multiplies
the light.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Pijewski

Hunger

My morning cereal can't contain my hunger.
I ask my wife for more. As usual, she refuses.
For once I'm undaunted and I eat the empty bowl.

Susan backs away saying I'm crazy.
I say I'm hungry. I start eating cups, plates,
    spoons, and the kitchen table.
Susan shouts that I'll eat us out of our house.

I approach her and apologize.
I stroke her cheek and, then, eat her:
    I am wild with hunger.
I enter the bedroom and eat the baby and her crib.
My belly has hardly swelled.
I eat the tub and toilet, stereo and books:
    anything in sight.

Within minutes the apartment is bare.
I eat a wall and the ceiling falls down.
    I eat that too.
I walk the hall to Mrs. Hanson's.
I don't bother to knock on her door, I just eat it down.
I eat that little biddy, her collection of crystal,
    her six cats, and every stick of her furniture.

I step outside and eat the building brick by brick.
People stop their cars to watch me.
I eat them and their cars.
I stalk up the street feeding on everything in my path:
    trees, hydrants, children, shrubs, barking dogs,
    tricycles, traffic signs, and the sidewalk,
    until the street's a vacant lot.
Nothing can stop me now.
Watch out.
I feel great!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Three Poems by Jim Henson

Things

Things, no matter what they are,
Can get out of control.

I can no more explain this
Than I can the Democratic convention of 1884,

Or the sound in my wife's back
As she accepts my natural urgency.

Suppose, as I write this,
There is a knock at the door,

Or the telephone rings.
Then what?

And if a white dog
Intercepts the postman at noon

Snatches the envelope with this poem in it
Before it reaches the desk of the The New Yorker?

Think what could happen
If the dog with the letter in his mouth

Blundered into a grey cadillac
And the driver pried the thing from the dog's jaw

Then for spite used typing correction fluid
And mailed the poem with *his* name

And the unprofessional blood and tooth marks on it?
If it was accepted

How could I afford a lawyer?
Think of the poems that are lost this way.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These things happen.
Even now a dog with a poem in his mouth

Is stealing across the lawn.
Planning to bury it probably.

These things can happen, I tell you.
Then arrive like the weather

Or the mail, unannounced
In innocent enough shapes

And before you know it
You are telling your story to a stranger.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For My Wife To Say When They Ask

If they ask you to speak of me
Say that I am much as they remember
That I sit all night
Charting the fathomless possibilities of failure
That I am out of work of course

Tell them how last christmas
I cut up all the money they sent
How I spend hours at a time
Arranging and rearranging the pieces
Use graphic descriptions
Especially when you recount
How I mutilated the larger bills

Say that I am convinced
That given enough time
I will be able to fit all the pieces together
In such a fashion
That my face will appear on each bill
Tell them that when I succeed
I plan to squander all the money on books

If they are still on their feet
Say that I am constructing the lines
In my poems with the idea
Of tying them all together
And hanging myself on my next birthday

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Elucidate on the technical brilliance
Of the new meters I have perfected
Be particularly eloquent
When you discuss my latest creation
The Tequilic foot
And describe the non-verbal method
In which I employ it
Dancing barefoot around your sunday hat
With a luger in each hand
Say that I consider cascading plaster
The ultimate aim of any poem
Say how it is one of my dance rhythms
That it always brings down the house

And don't forget to tell them
How I began work on a fire-place
In order to patent my Skoalic foot
How after four years work
It was at last finished
How with everything in readiness
I raided the china cabinet that night
And in a blind surge of creativity
Threw myself headlong into my work
How you rushed with me bleeding and in flames
To the hospital
Where they emptied four fire extinguishers
And administered 800 stitches
Tell them I say
It has all been worthwhile

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Acknowledgments

Some of these poems
first appeared:

1
as blisters
on my palms and heels

2
in braille
beneath the great fumbling
tip ends of my fingers

3
as blind spots
on the retinas of my eyes

4
like files
baked into white
loaves of bread

5
like the white eye
of a tooth
piercing the gum

6
This one
I have glimpsed
on and off for years

like a young girl
leaning from
a tower window

naked from the waist up
invented from
the waist down

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brendan Galvin

Tar

"Make it black."

1.
Technically it was liquid asphalt:
MC, RC, or 85/100—
nothing very far removed
from crude, and the floor of
the company barn was stratified
where it dripped off the tank bellies
and pipes of tractor-trailers.

You washed the fumes off skin
same as off trucks:
keronsene sloshed like soap and water,
dabbed around the face,
and at home, soap and water
on the kero, but not before
it could raise red pores along
thighs and cheeks,
and crease you around the eyes.

2.
Any time after midnight,
call me helper 64.
I come into the barn with
the Morris brothers, or maybe
Tweet and Lyle, or the Giant,
whose twin I'll later see
in *Introductory Genetics*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To check the list we have to pass
Magliese, the night dispatcher,
sleeping like a company cat
but waking at a step,
and short on greetings.

Tonight I go with driver 8
somewhere between the Androscoggin River
and the Hudson, praying it won't be
a penetration job on an expressway
where July piles 96 on
500 degrees of asphalt.
Better a pre-lunch mix-and-place
up country, then the luxury
of sleep on overtime among New Hampshire daisies.
Better yet, a rainout and layover.

3.
But who is driver 8?
3 is Godfrey Farrington, lordly
drunken as his name, who'll look
by 6 a.m. for lit cafes
to square himself away in.

The Giant is 7, and 12
is someone with a car
and girlfriend sunk in Chelsea Creek,
and 70 hours on the clock.
Nodding at the wheel, he'll
see things in the road
and plead, *Keep talking to me, kid.*

4 is an acrophobe, eyes
shut on bridges; 15 they call
The Naptha King: one spark
and we're the hottest thing in town.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When Jack Hayward broke in,
TB patients ran the rear motor.
Nobody knew but what
the black fumes mightn't done
some good. But son,
helpers get crazy from the heat.
With drivers it's the kidneys;
all these pot holes on bum springs.
Save your dough, and quit.

4.
When I who escaped try to imagine
a heaven for those true fly-by-nights
who sprayed earth
with the netherworld's hot fossils,
I see a place where logbook entries
satisfy the I.C.C. and gauges work
so nobody runs kero through the tank
to stretch the job and pacify a slide rule.
There a holiday is more than a gap
down the middle of a road
where two black strips don't overlap.
Jackie Howard tightens his tank cap right,
saving his skin this time,
and the Jack-O-Lantern Grill is open
beyond closing, its booths full of girls
to talk to and take home.
Punched in the gut, Lowell Frenchie
never goes down, and whatever
flames upon the night
isn't Monsanto Chemical or Esso.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poems by Billy Collins

The Games

Two muscle men stand face to face
in a large field and begin an Olympic insult contest.

The sky is blue and gold like a Swedish flag
and one calls the other a creep.

They look like peacocks in their colorful sporting gear
and the other calls the first one a sad shit.

People stop on their way home from work to watch.
An enterprising young man opens up a beer concession,
and the first one calls the other one a fart head.

The officials arrive in blazers and sit on folding chairs,
they take notes and hold up cards with numbers on them,
television cameras get into position, cables and microphones
too,
and the other one calls the first one a stupid prick.

Their faces are beet-red, nose to nose. It is too late
in the game for composure now that the Goodyear blimp is
overhead
filming this crowd that has swelled to 300,000 fans
and the first one calls the other one a dumb fuck.

They're leaning on each other's chests now,
cheering fills the sky, flags are unfurled, doves released
as marching bands hit full stride, tubas catching the sun
and the other one calls the first one a screaming asshole.

The fans can't get enough of this, but after a few more rounds
the final buzzer goes off and the muscle men shake hands,
put on warm-up jackets and retire to their dressing rooms,
having called it a draw, the fucking clowns.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RCA Victor

The dog is seated by the victrola
listening, head cocked

to the voice of his master
and thinking

how different he looks today
smaller, like a box
and his head an ornate
megaphone.

Where are the legs
he needs to walk me
where are the hands
that throw my ball

the dog wonders
trembling slightly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Peter Carnahan

Getting Somewhere. Benching in Suburban Station, Philadelphia.

I watch a feeble man in over-large clothes sliding his feet
across the terrazzo floor of the concourse, each foot
no more than four inches. The slip, slip on the brown
surface is lost in the echoes of the loudspeakers and
couplings and running groups, concentrated as if
commuters came in grim, mute football squads.
The distance between the column he is passing and my bench
has grown enormous.
He seems an entry in a logbook, landfall 1630 hours
off Food Island, contrary winds NNW.
The feet move onward with the persistence of waves under
a light breeze.
The patience of the sea. Odysseus
At the Phaeacian shore, the one true
Naked Voyager.

Across his bow strides in an instant the red-haired Nausicaa,
sloop rigged, cutter determined, tailored coat rakishly
unfurled, vest and culots, layers of sail for the electric
winds of the underworld Track 9.
She gains the wind, she descends the race of the stair,
Plotted for the lounge car. Sail Princess,
The one you leave in your wake works his body up wind,
Small waves over large,
His weather eye ready to bench, his mind
Already sensing the deep watery satisfaction of arrival.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Paul Hall

Approximate Poem

The things that I habitually say
are obvious. Why repeat them? Besides,
they are never what I *meant* to say.
The things that I want to say are like the book
next to the book that you took from the library
shelf. Now you're disappointed, aren't you. Now you're
dozing with that book sunk into your chest
like a gravemarker, and from now on, that book
keeps your place in death, wherever it is.
But that has nothing to do with what I
want say in *this* poem. And even if
you *had* picked the right book, what I would like to say
would be beneath your thumb as you turn the page.
(In the margin, actually, and would
that make me a marginal type? marginally
human?) What I want to say is always
peripheral. What I really have to say
limps. What I want to say causes people
to dial our number by mistake. Your
abruptness with them gags me. The man
across the street is idly swinging
a golf club. What I would really like to say
is disintegrating from wind divots.
What I'd like to say loses traction
along my larynx and comes out "uh."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

However, clearing my throat accordions
what I intend to say into an
unintelligible grunt. An important
oration that I had in mind was
skywritten in sparrow farts. I suppose
you missed it. I have a sore throat. It is
the passover of intended statements.
My dentist says that I eat too much sugar.
I say that my cavities are the
terrorist bombings of a frustrated
authority. Consequently, important
clues to what I have always wanted to say
are buried under my fillings. Much of
what I'd *still* like to say gets in the way
of breathing. I had to quit smoking. What I
meant to say was escaping under
a smoke screen. What I would like to say is
every word that you have ever regretted
saying. So the next time you think you're about
to make a fool of yourself, don't stop.
Say it. You can always defend yourself
by saying that you didn't mean to say
that. You can even blame it on me.
And I will know what I had in mind
and everybody will be satisfied.
That is to say. . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kathleen Spivack

I Want To Tell You

Sitting and writing on the dining room table,
I want to tell you what it is to be alive,
the yellow oilcloth table takes the imprint
of my thoughts; the tablecloth reads back

"I want." The mark of my pen
presses on the floral print: "I want to tell."
An explosion of daisies stands fading
in the flower pot, a used Dundee marmalade

jar, ivory. The ordinary daisies, as steadfast as a
woman, hold their yellow centers: he loves me,
loves me not; he picks me as he
likes: he steps on me.

The daisies make a still life
next to sour apples and, rotting
in a green bowl, artistic
sour lemons. They are trying

to look yellow. The children
are crying "We want milk" at the door. It
is dark, the sky's uneasy; it will rain.
The swallows' repetitions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

swooping through my ears, the note
of the bobwhite, calling in the bushes,
remains, I feel, long after
any sound I make has gone:

when my hands have done the dishes;
after I've recorded what it's like to mop the floor.
Why do I keep so clean, like all the other
animals? Why do I worry

if the children lie too thickly
dreaming their dreams, in a heavy sleep
like fog I write so much
on the inside of my brain

that I forget what it was
that I wanted to tell you. But
through the open door, warm
white rose petals blow in.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dan Masterson

Whatever You Say, Henry

(For Henry V. Larom 1903-1975)

He feels the catheter as penis,
is pleased with its sudden growth,
and goes to great lengths fondling
what he can't raise his head to see;
"Pinocchio" says I; and the urine
trickles to its holding bag.

In a haze that won't describe itself,
he sees the bottles above his head,
and wonders what good they do;
"Oil change" says I; and the drops
fall to his arm and in;
"Smart Ass" says he; "You bet yours"
says I, and the toes of one foot
move the sheet in pleasure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They like him here; like his bark,
the way he tells them why
they feel so smug, well enough
to baby him, reminding them
they'll be in a crib some day;
"Time's coming" says he.
"Whatever you say, Henry—whatever."

"Damn right" says he. Cancer or no,
he says it out: the chaplain on rounds,
gold watch and fob and vest,
comes puffing in to ask How-are-you-doing-
today-Henry? "Dying, thank you" says he.
What-is-your-line-of-work-Henry?
"English professor" says he. Oh-I'd-
better-watch-what-I-say, he says. "All
self-conscious people say that" says he.
Well-have-a-nice-day, he says.
"Amen" says he.

He still has his own mustache, and wants
to know what the plastic one does; "Oxygen
without the tent" she sings; "Enjoy it
like a breath of spring."—"Awful" says he.
"Behave" she says. "Beat it" says he.
"Please leave for a while" she says;
"I want to do his bedsores."—"Live it up"
says I. "Smart Ass" says he. "Yours,
at the moment" says I. "Bet yours" says he;
and she rolls him off his rubber ring.

The lounge is empty, the magazines
older than a barber shop's; nothing
changes—faces smile and frown, open
and close; gossip and death survive.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now he is propped on his side, his rump
healing in open air; the phone
rings from Alaska; the voice is hard
to place, but her name makes the catheter
jump on its hook. "She doesn't know"
says he; "It's been years."—"I'll write her"
says I. "Leave her be" says he. "Like hell"
says I; he shakes his head
in mock dismay, and sleeps in snow

For a matter of minutes, waking
in an old dream with three women naked
on a parched lawn, holding him down
in a shallow pine box; he's cold
and yelling for help. "Why
wouldn't you come; where were you?"
"Right here; it's all right,
I'm right here." Again sleep, longer,
deep enough to send me home.

Route 59 is slurred with rain; cars dead
along the curbs; the stink of the ward
hangs on.

The clock on the mantel clangs time
and again, the phone wakens the house,
a nurse talks from his room: he's confused,
thinks he is lost, would I talk him
back to sleep, do what I can.
"It'll be okay, Henry; it's just
a dream, like the box on the lawn;
the nurses will get you blankets,
and tuck you in, get you more milk,
one of those whopping pills; let me talk
with her again; you'll sleep,
you'll see."—"My ass" says he.
"No thanks" says I; "I saw it this afternoon."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wildflowers I Have Known

Carolyn Osborn

"All Texas plants, of course, in the strictest sense are wildflowers . . . ." *Howard S. Irvin,* Roadside Flowers Of Texas

1) Myself, the Sensitive Briar

Monica calls. There is a confessional tone to her voice and I don't want to hear the confession, the voice, anything. I'm already hungover from the upheavals of the preceding day plus I have a headache from too much dry sherry taken the preceding night. Sherry drinking is preparation for my old age. By the time I'm seventy I'll be able to belt it down with all the other hearty old ladies. I have to be in training for something. Discipline provides a needed order for one who lives alone.

"Craig wouldn't stay on the couch last night."

"I wouldn't expect him to. Craig will never stay on a couch

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when there's a bed present. Witness mine." At 7:30 a.m. even on the brightest day, it's indecent to discuss a mutual lover yet Monica complains with the best will in the world and I listen with feigned indifference as I'm supposed to be through with Craig. How is anyone ever completely through with anyone? My ex-husband, Dillard, divorced four years ago, calls me from Oklahoma, or Hawaii, or New Brunswick —either New Jersey or Canada; he makes films and doesn't care where he goes—when he's drunk or feeling lonely he calls and asks if I've quit smoking yet and what's the weather like in Texas. He says he has an abiding interest in bad characters.

Monica carries on, "You've never had three children standing at your door asking for lunch money at 6:30 in the morning. Craig gave it to them."

"That was generous." I try not to sound bitter. Craig never gave me anything but a telephone call. I can't say I love him. I'm sure I don't. So why am I sitting on the other end of a telephone holding my sloppy, envious heart in my hands? I know some of the answers, a survival trick I learned during the years I lived with Dillard: Don't ask yourself questions you don't have partial answers to. Monica now has two men, such as they are, a runaway husband—gone to L.A. with one of his students—and a jelly-like lover who may slip away before she's aware he's gone. Yesterday I had two; George, the over-ardent Arab professor I don't want, and Craig, a would-be husband who asked me to marry him too late. Now I have none. Today all their negative qualities seem less negative, especially after four years of living alone and liking it less. Yesterday I was brave, and free, and strong. Today I'm the dejected reject. Yesterday I laughed at Craig's proposal and sprayed cold water on George and his mariachi band. (Although he's lived in Texas long enough to get a Ph.D., George exists in a state of cultural confusion. He will use any means at hand to court the woman he wants.) Pursuers drive me away, yet once I'm out there running in front of them I begin to feel they have rejected me simply because

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they can't keep up. I'm playing the game my instincts have been drilled to play for forty years—men hunt, women run—and all the other players have gone. Superior staying power as a long distance runner is no compensation for lovers lost.

I tell Monica as fairly as I can that she'll have to deal with Craig and her children as best she can. It's time for me to go open up my shop. I unchain my bike from the tree on the terrace and am off pedalling furiously up and down Austin's hills, working off all kinds of animosities on the streets.

2) Roselle, Blue-Eyed Grass; Tom, Red Prickly-Poppy; Mathias, Wild Onion

They're not open yet. I give the code knock and am let in. This is Wildflowers, a florist shop owned by my friend Roselle. She and some other nature lovers run the place. Flower power gone to seed, Roselle says. To look at the exterior you wouldn't think so. Huge galvanized washtubs and buckets are stuffed with fresh flowers. Hanging baskets swing from the wooden awning. Everything smells good: an effusion of brightness and joy spreads over the sidewalk.

Inside it's different. A big live pine Christmas tree Roselle couldn't sell and nobody would undecorate has been standing by the doorway since last Christmas. It is now October. The decorations are eclectic camp—empty pill bottles, a yellow rubber band, white papier-mache pigeons with chicken feather wings, a swag made of interlocked pop-top rings, a lost key, one ordinary shiny red ball that assumes sexual significance hung next to a clear plastic icicle.

Further in the interior there's a chopping block, a tree stump where long-stemmed flowers are relentlessly sliced off, and a dusty old wicker baby buggy filled with baby's breath, a depressing object I think. Roselle loves it. Behind the buggy is a piano that someone, name unknown, comes in to play when he feels like playing. Someone is tall, has dark curly hair, plays only classical, and is rumored to be a rich man's son. The unknowns in Roselle's life are usually mysteriously

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rich until proven poor. This may never happen. There's very little attempt to prove or to explain anything at Wildflowers. People wash in and out, objects collect.

Roselle and Tom, her main helper and current live-in lover, are sitting on the edge of an ancient moldy pink couch twisting wire around small bouquets of black and white roses.

"Somebody giving a *danse macabre?*" My early morning rancor, stifled until now by play-acting with Monica, seeps out.

"Integrated wedding," Tom snaps back. A self-made Marxist, he's brisk, efficient, all common sense, no nonsense. Roselle surrounds herself with a mixture, half-and-half, of people like Tom and those like her, vague, indecisive, kinky. She floats back and forth between the two worlds, one foot suspended above the wild side, one above the tame.

"Why don't you spray everything gray?"

Roselle looks up and grins. "It's not an integrated wedding, just a couple of freaks getting married." Except for her uniform, jeans and the first shirt she lays hands on in the morning, she resembles the illustrations of princesses in the *My Bookhouse* volumes I read as a child. If George, the Arab, with his indiscriminate passion for blue-eyed blondes ever saw us together, he'd suffer harem visions. I'm the leggy sort. My hair is short and honey-colored, my eyes are dark blue. Roselle is smaller, younger, in her late twenties; she has long straw-colored hair and light blue eyes. Jailed once for possession of pot, she's on probation now and has given up growing marijuana in her greenhouse.

Handing Tom a dripping bunch of daisies so he can whack the long stems off, I wander into the greenhouse. One room, sky-lighted, it stands thin wall to thin wall next to Andrew's Barbershop. For all her dedication to the beauties of the earth, Roselle lacks the right touch with green plants. She does well raising all-flowering types and can make the surliest camelia bloom, but she either trys too hard or cannot truly love philodendron, dieffenbachia, or any other common green leaf. I'm looking at a brown-edged Boston fern when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the wall I hear a customer at Andrew's saying, "What this town needs is a good whorehouse."

Lots of discussions about what this town needs go on at Andrew's. He satisfies one of those needs, a barbershop where a man can still get a haircut for two dollars—the reason he's open now. If you make a living doing two dollar haircuts, you have to be up early. "Most people don't realize they need a haircut till they look at themselves hard in the mirror first thing in the morning. That's the moment of truth," Andrew has told me. He's Chicano, but has adopted an English name; Andres anglicized to Andrew sounds more American. Since they're both minorities, he and the Wildflowers get along well. Some of his customers don't understand this; most of them never know it. While sitting in the barber's chair they make elaborate plans for Andrew to cut off long hair or, if possible, shave it off—another thing this town needs, less longhairs. They curse "hippies" vehemently, sometimes calling them "beatniks" instead. A disparaging category is a long time dying in the west. Andrew pays no attention, lets them vent their wrath, and for Christmas gives Roselle a calendar full of colored pictures of saints.

When I go back to get my daisies I see Mathias has burst in. I didn't hear him, yet I'm sure he exploded in the doorway in a huff. He's one of the wilder ones, forever in trouble or just about to be in trouble.

"The guy across the street says we took his bear!"

"Oh God! Who wants it?" Roselle asks.

Hal, the guy across the street, is a filling-station owner, and his bear is a big stuffed brown one he shot on the only trip he ever made to Alaska. Generally it stays in an unused carwash stall, looking sadly through dirty glass panes. My crafts shop is right next to the stall so I pass the bear every day. I'll miss him. Some people have familiar statues they pass in parks. I had the bear. Glass-eyed though he was, he seemed to contemplate the daily scene with equanimity, and why shouldn't he? He was stuffed, forever rearing on his hind-paws, in an attitude of aggression. Fearsome, all threat and no bite, un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able to scratch his own fleas, and what is more, unable to feel them, all hostility safely expressed in his stance.

Mathias stumbles around flailing his arms, his hair zinging out in all directions, a newmade scarecrow scared.

Roselle is snipping off pieces of wire to twist around the last black and white bouquets. "We get blamed for everything. Who would take a stuffed bear? Why should I—?"

"Mathias?" Tom has one of the virtues of the simplistic thinker—he doesn't mind jumping to obvious conclusions.

"It was on a stand with little wheels. The door wasn't locked." Mathias grins so self-confidently that I'm now sure of his intentions. The eternal prankster who takes only apparently useless things—he's made off with Roselle's empty milk cartons, a whole side of a barn that collapsed (he gave that to Roselle who used it for panelling the inside of the shop), a cardboard box of notes for somebody's dissertation, a hideously painted ceramic Sleepy dwarf from an overdecorated lawn—he says he's just cleaning up trash. I've gone along with him till this moment, especially as he's never graduated to professional burglary. Now I see it is his pleasure to steal and to boast about the theft. Since he's stolen a figure from my landscape, I'm as angry as any outraged citizen missing a bronze Robert E. Lee.

"You should have seen me at three this morning pushing him along the sidewalk."

"Where is it now?" I ask.

"In cold storage. Best place for a bear from Alaska."

"Here?" Menace edges Tom's voice. He is tall and physically well-filled out. Mathias, just as tall, is skinny and flushed with frantic pride.

"Didn't you see him when you got the roses?"

"No, we were in a hurry."

"Must have been the sheet. . . camouflage."

We all go into the cold storage room behind the couch. There, next to the wall behind two buckets of pink carnations, a bulky white shape looms, paws showing a little underneath the sheet. There's something pathetic about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those exposed claws—somehow they remind me of all the nights I've spent in bed alone trying to warm my own cold feet.

"Really d-u-m-b." Tom spells out certain words. "You know the cops will look here. Where did you plan to put him after he cooled off, Mathias?"

"I didn't—I mean I didn't have any long range—Uh . . . I . . . I don't know."

Tom's attention jumps to the immediate problem. "Let's see—We could put him in the delivery truck, keep the sheet, flowers on the sides, cover him with palm fronds and take him—" He looks at me.

"Oh no! My apartment isn't going to be hideout for Mathias's bear."

"Just today. Then we'll find another place."

"No."

"I'm freezing," Roselle says in a dreamy soft voice. We all move out of cold storage. "We could ask Andrew."

"No time. He's too close. They're bound to look there. This wedding is at eleven and we're not even through with the flowers for it."

"Please." Roselle implores me. Usually I'm an easy touch, too willing to help anyone in need. Today the continual answer is, "No!"

"You'd never get him down the stairs to my place. He's too heavy to carry."

"Naw. He's light. Hollow inside. Two of us could carry him." Mathias, the lifter stating his professional opinion, looks pleased.

"How are you going to disguise him? My landlady is around all morning and so are the other tenants. Herr Strook has nothing else to do but watch people coming in or going out. He'll tell Mrs. Gaither he's seen you and the two of them together with their gothic imaginations, will decide you're delivering a corpse."

Tom squats down in front of me, "Just for today, Margaret. We'll tell your landlady it's a piece of furniture. . . an an-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tique couch with claw feet.''

Roselle giggles.

''She won't believe it. The place is crammed with furniture already.''

''Margaret, you've got to help us. If I get caught doing anything the slightest bit illegal, I'll get sent back to jail.'' Everytime Roselle mentions jail she shudders, and I shudder for her.

''What about my shop?'' I ask.

''Too close.''

''What about—? Hapsell, yes. Maybe he will.''

''Who's Hapsell?''

''Sculptor. Lives above me and Herr Strook. I'll call him.'' How can I phone Hapsell and ask him to take in a cold/hot bear? How can anyone ask favors? Do unto others as you have done for them. I've done plenty for Hapsell including sheltering his girl when his rich aunt came for a two week visit, and taking him homemade soup when he was stricken with flu. I call. He agrees to hide the bear if Tom promises to move it tomorrow. One more thing in his studio won't bother him for a day.

3) Pop Sigh, the Great Pokeweed

I wheel my bicycle in, take the CLOSED sign off the door of my shop, put the daisies in a vase, sit down on a stool behind the counter, and hope no one comes in for thirty minutes at least. The thing to do is never to answer the telephone in the morning. The thing to do is to stay in bed. Stay in your own room. Don't go out. It's not safe on the streets. You can get mugged, kidnapped, raped, run over, lose your lover, be opportuned by friends. It's nothing, I tell myself: people go through these phases. You can be living a quiet reasonably content life, then the moon changes, events pile up, accidents happen. I was all right before wasn't I? There was the shop, my customers, my scattered friends, a drink at five with Hapsell when he was between girls, a little light-minded philosophy about the acceptance of things as they are, laughter

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over mundane foibles. Now I'm feeling desperate and trapped. How did I get here? Huddled on top of a high stool, feeling the invisible yet heavy weight of a dunce's cap, I wonder: By what crooked route did I arrive?

Is my background important, my family the key? No amount of speculation will change it. I can wander through ancestral halls shouting for everyone to come out and be accounted for and who'll turn up? Ghosts of good burghers muttering about being disturbed, one or two zanies who evidently passed on their proclivities to me, one known drunk (how many unknown?), an uncle of generations past who found the New World so disappointing he returned to Ireland in time to be one of the potato famine's victims, women who raised families and went to church on Sundays, an aunt who painted weak yellowy, greeny, pinky landscapes.

I have the regulation number of parents; a married sister, Cicily, living in London; a brother, Jack, who's a marine biologist working on the Texas coast. I don't see him often. How I arrived here has little to do with them. I didn't choose to be the oldest. If order of birth has anything to do with who one is, and I grant it generally does, I have played the elder child. Used to sit up nights with my parents wondering what to do about Jack, the youngest, if he ever did come home. I didn't take piano lessons because Cicily, the middle one, needed something only she could do. Nor can I say I missed those lessons. Painting, though I had no true talent, was left to me as science was to Jack. You would have thought my parents were trying to provide the faculty for a small liberal arts college. They did the best they could with the material on hand. It's not their fault I would not persevere. Somewhere along the way Jack and I switched places; I became uncertain about exactly what my life would be and he became the eldest, responsible, settled, producer of grandchildren. He reads the newspaper every morning. I catch the headlines out of the corner of my eye while passing the newsstand or wait till Hapsell, or Herr Strook, or Roselle tell me the news. A stranger stopped me on the street and told me when Nixon

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

resigned. People will act as couriers. Town criers cry on any street. Everyday I mumble the escapist's prayer, "Oh Lord, keep the real world away from me!" while Jack, gnashing his teeth through his morning bowl of granola, hollers, "Bring it on!" I don't know what Cicily says. The last time I talked to her she'd adopted an English accent. By the time that much nasality has frosted over a Texas drawl and is pushed through a trans-Atlantic cable at 5 a.m., you can't hear much more than, "Ahlo, love!" and "Ta-ta, deah!"—one of the shorter summations of life.

From hello to goodbye there is the space between, and whatever mixture of heredity, environment, and bad luck led me here, here be I. Were my parents feeling anxious at the moment I was conceived? In Adam's fall did we sin all? What is the First Cause? Why do children turn out like they do? Shall I call my friendly hometown geneticist and ask him? Am I a combination of my father's benign cynicism and my mother's gleeful softness? Was it raining the day I was born? Can blame be laid? I would like to lay some. Shall I record my dreams and thereby reveal all terrors and fearful wishes? Pop Sigh, please take note:

"I'm on an elevator that goes awry. Instead of going up and down it careens sideways spiraling around the interior of a building, usually a hotel. I'm trying to get to a particular room in order to meet someone and I can never make it."

"Ah, my dear. The hotel, a tall building, yes? A place where people sleep. A phallus. You desire to meet someone who will give you the orgasm. You can never make it. You wish to be made. . . laid, yes?"

"Yah! Yah! But, I ask you, is this the key to my soul?"

"*Nein* . . . to the libido."

Oh, I love Pop Sigh. Crazy about him. He arranges my confusions into labelled groups. In order to please him I invent dreams such as the one above. Notice how well he handles American slang, this wise old man whose presence I invoke whenever I'm in need of a companion. Usually I put him in a convenient corner. He smokes a cigar and, like Ein-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stein, wears white socks.

"Pop, I've drifted to the backwater of existence. I'm here in the brackish atmosphere of my shop surrounded by dried flowers, needlepoint kits, unpainted wooden boxes, shells, African trade beads, quilt-frames, lumps of clay in five and ten pound bags, papers of all colors and sizes, all things ready to be made. My last known lover is making my best friend. I know. Monica called and complained to me this morning. What am I to do?"

"Wait." Pop flicks his cigar ash on the floor and is gone. Sometimes he moves by his own volition. I am not totally in control. I hate waiting. Patience, like most virtures, is monotonous.

4) Bullnettle

Heavens, what a handsome young man! Haven't I seen him somewhere before? But you don't say, "Haven't I seen you somewhere before?" to a policeman. I walk half-way across the room to meet him.

"Can I help you?"

"I'm looking for a stuffed animal." He's got dark curly hair.

"I can't help you much there. People usually make their own. I don't know of a crafts shop that carries forms . . . no plain white unbleached muslin animals waiting to be decorated if that's what you've got in mind. I can supply buttons for eyes, or bells for buttons, or—"

"I don't want to make a stuffed animal."

He appears so agonized I say, "Well, it's all right if you should want to. A lot of men have taken up crafts lately. I've got three male customers who embroider, not to mention the knitters and the rug makers."

"No!" His hands make a definite negative movement in the air before him, the fingers tensed and strong. I know now where I've seen him.

"Are you a pianist daylighting as a policeman or a policeman moonlighting as a pianist?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Neither one. Both."

"I thought so."

He groans. "Do you know where they've put that bear?"

"Who is 'they'?"

"The Wildflowers. I don't know what to do. If I went to Andrew's to look they would hear every word. How can I arrest Roselle when I've been using her piano free for six months? You don't find that many old Steinways laying around for free practice, and it's in perfect tune."

"Could you take off that uniform? It's a lovely color of blue, but I can't talk to you when you're in uniform. It's a block I have."

"You want me to strip here at 9:30 a.m. in the middle of a crafts shop?" He begins fumbling with his tie knot.

Andrew walks in and asks if I've got change for a twenty. He looks at the piano player/policeman, winks at me, and goes to the cash register. I give him change and nod toward the storage room. He grins, then follows me. Andrew loves intrigue. I let him out the back door.

The policeman is brooding over jars full of marbles. "I can't take my clothes off in front of a strange woman."

"I'd like to know why not? Women strip their clothes off in front of thousands of strange men every day. Maybe you need background music. Let's see—No, I guess we can't go over to Roselle's and let you play."

"Play the piano and strip at the same time! That's physically impossible. What if I just took off my badge?"

I shake my head.

"How do I know you really know anything about that bear?"

"You don't, but I do."

"I believe you are enjoying this."

"I am. I also intend to do something about it. Andrew has gone to get one of those striped smocks he throws over his customers. I hope you'll throw it over your threatening blue shirt."

"Are you going to have him cut my hair too?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No. I try not to carry things too far."

5) Goat's-Rue

I do though, or I get carried by events, people, my own emotional acrobatics. I begin a day crawling off misery's floor, end it after midnight doing a highwire act consisting of Mathias, Tom, me, and the bear. We wouldn't let Roselle help because of her police record. Jack, the pianist/policeman, would lose his job if he were caught. Andrew was peripheral and didn't need to be dragged in. Hapsell's help extended to lifting the bear in the van. Beyond that he wasn't necessary. Neither was I until I convinced Tom a look-out was essential.

Taking a bear is one act; taking it back is another. We try to impress this on Mathias who is downcast about the whole enterprise. He seems to think the job is too easy.

"Nothing to it. You flip the door open and push him in."

"How much noise does the door make?" Tom asks. Oh, there should be a Tom in every group, someone who foresees danger in the mundane, someone who knows a rattling door can draw an enraged gun-toting-Alaskan-bear-hunter-filling-station-operator out of the bushes growing beside his car-wash stall.

Which is, of course, what happens. Almost forty years of living amidst gun-toters had not prepared me for the fear that ripples bones when gaping at the end of a shotgun. Two small round circles, a beast with eyes set too close together. I choose the idiot's method of confrontation, looking at something else. My eyes swerve to the gun-holder's shoes. They are crepe-soled. I can't see what color. At once I decide: I will not be shot by a man wearing crepe-soled no-colored shoes.

"Put that down!" Being scared doesn't wash out indignation.

"You all stole my bear!"

He continues holding the gun on me. Mathias and Tom have already gotten the bear back in place and are crouching behind it. I stand by the open door wondering why I had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been so determined to see Mathias return something he'd stolen.

"We all didn't. If you don't put the gun down I'm not going to talk to you anymore." I start walking away relying on the code which doesn't allow shooting in the back, especially not women.

"How come you're here putting him back in the middle of the night if you didn't take him in the first place? Say, aren't you the girl from next door?"

We progressed to the corner street light which gave Tom and Mathias room to run to the van. "Have you put that gun down?"

"Yeah."

I turn around. "My name is Margaret. I own the crafts shop. You're Hal, aren't you?" He didn't seem so angry now. "Is that the gun you killed the bear with?" It isn't, but he needs some more cooling down time.

"No'm. This here's a twenty-gauge, a bird-hunting gun. Now for a bear, you need a magnum."

I watch the traffic light change, cars whizz by. Across the street, music pours out of a bar. What am I doing here in the middle of a medium-sized city, pop. 300,000, talking to Hal, a gas jockey who is convinced he's a great hunter? Dan'l Boone kilt a bar. He carved that message on a tree years ago and years haven't done away with Dan'l. He stalks city streets right now.

"How'd you get him?" Who cares? Nobody but the victim, the hunter, and other hunters who'll listen to a "How I Got It" tale knowing that's the price for getting to tell their own. Hal has been too busy at the gas pumps for too long, or maybe all the hunters he knows have forsaken him. As it happened, he'd gone to Alaska to rope a bear.

"Why?" We are sitting on a wooden bench by the front door of the station; cars thin out a little as we talk. I'm not sure where Tom and Mathias have gone. The van is still there.

"I used to rodeo a lot. I was a roper. You know what I mean?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I nod. In the little Central Texas town where I grew up there was a rodeo every summer.

"There was this fellow, Dillard Williams, here in town wanted to make a movie of me roping a bear. I didn't have nothing much else to do. It was before I started running this station, and the rodeos round here was over, and I was broke. He flew me up to Alaska. We had to look a long time, had to get a guide even. I didn't have no horse. Wouldn't have helped none, bear's too heavy for a horse, but if you're a roper you get used to working with a horse. You know what I mean?"

I said I did. Not in the way he meant though. Being married to Dillard about ten years I knew more, and less, than I thought I should. All that time he was in Alaska he told me he was shooting a wildlife documentary. He didn't say anything about concocting a rodeo extravaganza.

"A horse would've shied anyway." Hal was genuinely grieved about not having that horse. "We had to find a bear near some trees so I could tie him. I wasn't going to tie him long, just long enough to get the pictures made. So there was me, and the guide, and Dillard taking pictures when we found the bear. I roped him ok, but he didn't pull against the rope like a calf does. He came toward us while I was getting the rope to a tree. Mad! Lord, lady, that bear was mad, on his hind legs running at me. I couldn't drop the rope. It was like I was stuck to it. If you been roping all your life you don't let go easy. Besides, Dillard was shouting, 'Great action, great! Hold him Hal! Hold him!' So I was trying to run backwards and I fell. The guide shot the bear. He fell on top of me. I nearly died of suffocation. I never been so . . . so mortified, getting my picture took with a bear on top of me. The guide thought we was plain fools. He cussed me and Dillard half a day, and we was in bad trouble. My leg was broke, and the bear was shot out of season. But Dillard—He's so rich he don't have good sense. He told the guide he'd pay the fine. We went on back to Juneau, sent another plane with the guide to get the bear. Dillard had him skinned out,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and stuffed, and gave him to me. We been together since. I don't rope no more."

Hal stared at the driveway through the station, and I stared too, remembering Dillard's get-rich-any-minute-now fantasies. The year of the bear-roping movie was probably the one I learned a good soup could be made of chicken necks.

"Listen, Hal, I like your bear. I say hello to him every morning when I come to work. I didn't take him. I only helped bring him back. The guy who took him is a kind of nut, I guess."

"Like me and Dillard." Hal grinned.

"No. You and Dillard have more imagination. Thank you for telling me about the bear." I get up, stretch, and walk away, leaving him sitting there on the bench fondling his shotgun. I find Tom and Mathias both huddled in the back of the van. All the way to Roselle's Tom and I cuss Mathias. Among other things I call him, "A wrong-headed four-toed pissant," and Tom follows with, "Babbling bourgeois bum."

Mathias doesn't look contrite; he looks interested, as if he's wondering what we'll think to call him next. He'll take any kind of attention he can get. I poke Tom with my elbow and we both shut up. Sighing to ourselves and grinding our teeth, we make the common noises of nightmare dreamers hopelessly awake.

6) Cocklebur

When I get home I give Hapsell his van key and start down to my apartment. Herr Strook is still up, determined not to miss anything tonight I guess. He stops me outside his door.

"Margaret, have you been decorating your terrace?" He's peering over my left shoulder so I turn and look. There, by the glow of the porch light I've left on for myself, I can see someone has scribbled something with green chalk all over the cement.

"No. I haven't been—kids maybe?"

"My dear friend, there are no children in this neighbor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hood." He bends over the railing beside me. "I believe it is a message of some sort. The script is difficult though."

I push past him to run down the stairs. George, the ardent Arab, has snuck back in the night and written something in Arabic on the square of cement in front of my door. A note flutters from the doorknob. "I have written this poem for you. Love, George."

It's probably wretched sentimental poetry about his heart and mine entwined beneath moon-drenched date palms silhouetted against midnight-blue skies. I stare at the green loops and whorls feeling dizzy, then I hear a voice from above.

"You want me to translate for you?"

I look up. In the fork of the oak tree, like a genie who has popped out of a bottle, is George.

"No. I'd rather look at the design."

"Margaret, you are difficult."

There is some truth in this. However, loss of a would-be husband through bad timing is no reason for being won by a man who has nothing to recommend him but persistence.

"Try not to be so difficult to woo."

He sounds regrettably like an owl. His feet—he's wearing sandals as usual—have a fascinating resemblance to owl claws curled around the limb. I fumble in my pocket for the key. Once it's in the door, I look up again at George who's still perched in the tree.

"I can't have you sitting around in my tree all night, George. I'm going in. You must go home."

"I will not. I will sleep in front of your door."

"That will be uncomfortable."

"Margaret, are you speaking to me? I can't hear you," Herr Strook calls.

"Who is that?" George quavers.

A voice in the night may be any voice.

"My father. He's just arrived and is upstairs saying hello to Hapsell." I pause to let the information take effect.

"Yes, I'm going in," I shout to Herr Strook. To my left I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hear George scrabbling out of the tree. Amazing. Even the imitation father of a middle-aged woman can send an over-ardent Arab home. I slam the door behind me hoping a rain will wash away George's green chalk. If you lose control of events, you can always hope natural forces will intervene on your side.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

T. Coraghessan Boyle's fiction has been published in *Esquire, TriQuarterly, Quest/77* and elsewhere. This is his second appearance in *The Paris Review.*

Stephen Minot's stories have appeared in *Atlantic, Playboy,* and *Harper's.* A collection of his stories, *Crossings,* is available in paperback from the University of Illinois Press.

Carolyn Osborne's collection of short stories, *A Horse of Another Color,* was recently published by the University of Illinois Press.

David Polk is currently working on a book of stories and poems, and is editor of the Deer Crossing Press.

Diane Vreuls is currently writing a novel and teaching at Oberlin College. Her novel, *Are We There Yet?,* was published by Simon & Schuster. She was recently awarded the National Endowment for the Arts grant for prose.

Joy Williams' first novel, *State of Grace,* was nominated for the National Book Award. Her second, *The Changeling,* will be published by Doubleday in May.

POETRY

Susan Astor's poems have appeared in *The Chowder Review, Big Moon,* and *Abraxas.* She was the second prize winner of the 1976 *Carolina Quarterly* poetry contest.

Peter Carnahan administers the literature and theatre programs of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. He has had history articles published, and a play and several television scripts produced. This is his first poetry publication.

Gordon Carrega's work has appeared in *Loon, The Fault, Back Roads,* and elsewhere.

William Coakley's work has appeared in *The Nation, New American Review, Poetry Review* (London) and the *Quarterly Review of Literature.*

Billy Collins is an editor of *The Midatlantic Review* and an assistant professor at Herbert H. Lehman College (CUNY).

Diana Der Hovanessian's poetry has appeared in *American Scholar, The Nation, Harper's, Mademoiselle, American Poetry Review* and numerous literary quarterlies. An *Anthology of Armenian Poetry* which she has translated and edited will be published by Columbia University Press in late 1978.

Norman Dubie's fourth book, *The City of the Olesha Fruit,* will be published by Doubleday late in 1978.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Philip Fried's work has appeared in *The Antioch Review, North American Review* and *The Little Magazine.* He is currently completing his Ph.D. at Stony Brook University (SUNY).

Gene Frumkin teaches at the University of New Mexico. He is also co-editor with Stanley Noyes of the recently issued anthology, *The Indian Rio Grande: Recent Poems From Three Cultures.*

Brendan Galvin's two books are *The Minutes No One Owns* and *No Time for Good Reasons,* both published by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

Penelope Gilliatt is the author of two novels, *One by One* and *A State of Change,* and three collections of short stories, the latest being *Splendid Lives* (Viking). She is currently working on a libretto commissioned by the English National Opera Company while writing film reviews for the *New Yorker.*

Paul Hall is currently teaching at Wayne State University in Detroit where he is also a doctoral student in English. His work appeared in issue #64 of *The Paris Review.*

William Harrold's poems have appeared in the *Antioch Review, Poetry Now,* and numerous other small magazines.

Jim Henson is currently teaching and working on an MFA at the University of Arkansas.

Michael Hogan's first collection of short stories will be published this Spring by Gallimaufry.

T.R. Hummer's chapbook, *Translation of Light: 1976,* was recently published by the Cedar Creek Press. A full-length collection of his work will be released by Seagull Publications later this year.

David Ignatow is the Poet In Residence at York College, CUNY. His tenth book of poems, *Tread the Dark,* will be published next spring by the Atlantic Monthly Press. He is the most recent recipient of the Bollingen Prize from Yale University.

Jane Kenyon's first book, *From Room To Room,* will be published next fall by the Alice James Poetry Cooperative. Her work has appeared in the *American Poetry Review, The Nation,* and elsewhere.

Abigail Luttinger is co-editor of *Gravida.* Her book *Good Evening and Other Poems* will soon be published by the Penumbra Press.

Dan Masterson's volume of poems, *On Earth As It Is,* was recently published by the Unversity of Illinois Press. He is a 1977 winner of a Borestone Mount in Poetry Award.

John Pijewski, who recently won the Grolier Poetry Prize, was published in issue #70 of *The Paris Review.*

Holly Prado's three books are *Nothing Breaks Off at the Edge* (New Rivers), *Feasts* (Momentum) and *Losses* (Laurel). Her work has appeared in *The American Poetry Review, Rolling Stone* and *Ms.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ross Shideler's work has appeared in *Poetry, Moondance, Grove, The Paris Review,* and other small magazines.

Naomi Shihab has been a Poet-in-the-Schools in Texas for the past four years. Her two chapbooks, *Tattooed Feet* and *Eye-to-Eye* were published by the Texas Portfolio Press.

Kathleen Spivack is the Director of The Advanced Poetry Workshop in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of *The Jane Poems* (Doubleday, 1974) and *Flying Island* (Doubleday, 1973). Her work has appeared in the *New Yorker, Poetry, Encounter, Atlantic Monthly,* and numerous other magazines.

David Wagoner's tenth book of poems, *Who Shall Be the Sun?,* will be published this Fall by the University of Indiana Press. He has also published nine novels, edits *Poetry Northwest,* and is the new poetry editor of the Princeton University Press.

Claire Nicolas White's poems have appeared in *Harper's, Atlantic Monthly, Saturday Review* and elsewhere. Her novel, *The Death of the Orange Trees,* was published by Harper & Row in 1963.

Barry Yourgrau's collection of prose poems, *The Sadness of Sex,* was recently published by the Whale Cloth Press.

INTERVIEWS

Helen McCloy Ellison is a former reporter for the *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky). She is presently teaching freshman composition and in the writing at the University of Louisville.

Ellessa Clay High is presently working for a doctorate in creative writing at Ohio University. Her poems and stories have appeared in *Adena,* the *Mississippi Review* and numerous other publications.

Peter Stitt conducted the interviews with John Berryman and James Wright that appeared in *The Paris Review.* He is presently teaching at the University of Houston and compiling a collection of interviews with distinguished poets.

ART

Joe Brainard shows with Fischbach Gallery in New York. Z Press recently published his *Twenty Mini-Essays.* His stories, poems and art have been published widely in small magazines.

Judith Ornstein is represented by Willard Gallery in New York. She has shown at the Willard, the Yale University Art Gallery, and the Philadelphia College of Art.

The Paris Review acknowledges a grant from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines which derives in part from funds received from the New York State Council of the Arts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lower Manhattan Ocean Club

121 Chambers Street, New York, N.Y. 10007
349-6766

Lunch, Dinner, Drinks, Dancing
and Mickey Ruskin

All Major Credit Cards Accepted.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Paris Review Prints by Jimmy Ernst Howard Kanowitz

signed and numbered in an edition of 180.
Printed by The Screen Print Workshop,
Easthampton, N.Y.
Slides available from:

The Paris Review
541 East 72 St.
N.Y.C. 10021

His triumphant achievement...his tragic life

JOHN BERRYMAN

An Introduction to the Poetry

JOEL CONARROE

The poetry of John Berryman is highly personal, reflecting the flamboyant, drama-filled life which ended with his suicide in 1972. This new addition to the *Columbia Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry* series clarifies the complex relationship between the poet's ultimately liberating work and his private torments.

$10.95 at bookstores or direct from

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
136 South Broadway, Irvington, New York 10533

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

front. EL5-8857

back. EL5-9307

reservations . PL9-1650

"The New York Hotel with the endearing qualities (and cuisine) of a Fine Inn."

HOTEL Algonquin

59 West 44th St., New York, N.Y. 10036

Reservations: (212) MU 7-4400

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELAINE

LOVES

THE PARIS REVIEW

ELAINE'S

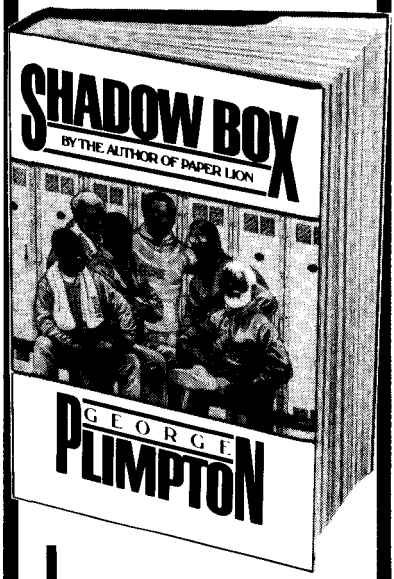
1703 SECOND AVE
NEW YORK CITY

reservations: TE1-9558

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"George Plimpton's best book"

—*Saturday Review*



In SHADOW BOX, the best-selling author of *Paper Lion* and *Out of My League* takes on the world of prizefighting — and scores a knockout!

"Bloody good show....
The reader is charmed and beguiled [by] a smörgasbord of characters: boxers, writers, hangers-on, and peripheral zanies....A delightful mélange."
—*N.Y. Times Book Review*

"Fabulously entertaining
...Neither Plimpton fans nor boxing fans can afford to miss this one." —*Publishers Weekly*

A BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB ALTERNATE SELECTION

$9.95 at bookstores

G. P. Putnam's Sons

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What's in the lunchpails?

—Bob Barrett

Copies of **New Letters**?

It's worth thinking about.

"... *NEW LETTERS* has emerged as an important new university-sponsored literary magazine . . . *NEW LETTERS* in its present form seems destined to a long and healthy life — a fate well-deserved. It is also a magazine to be envied . . . " — *American Libraries*

" . . . within the best of humanistic traditions, one can read of Richard Wright, Paul Goodman, Countee Cullen, Ursule Molinaro, et. al. with interest, excitement and — yes — relevance." — J. Pyros, *Small Press Review*

Subscriptions at $8 a year or $12.00 for 2 years
(Libraries and other institutions $10.00 a year)

New Letters 5346 Charlotte Kansas City, Mo. 64110

University of Missouri-Kansas City

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW

3032 Rackham Bldg. Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

THE *MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW* ANNOUNCES
A SPECIAL ISSUE FOR THE SPRING OF 1979

THE MOON LANDING AND ITS AFTERMATH

ESSAYS, INTERVIEWS, MEMOIRS, FICTION, POETRY,
AND GRAPHIC WORKS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE *MQR* OFFICE BY

November 1, 1978

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SPECIAL OFFER from the FICTION COLLECTIVE, AMERICA'S MOST EXCITING ALTERNATIVE PRESS

STATEMENTS 2

ed. by Jonathan Baumbach & Peter Spielberg introduction by Robert Coover

An omnibus of heretofore unpublished short fictions by twenty-five authors; a showcase for some of the most innovative contemporary American writers. "Accomplished, fresh, varied, ever interesting." *Publishers Weekly* **$2.95** paper

☐ **FIND HIM! by Elaine Kraf**
"Elaine Kraf's ability to transfuse her characters with a vibrant, often terrifying reality, startles the reader anew on every page." *Kay Boyle* **$3.95** paper

☐ **THE BROAD BACK OF THE ANGEL by Leon Rooke**
"...strange, articulated, cinematic prose, which leaves out nothing, not the gesture of a hand, a noise on the street... he modulates it to perfection." *New York Times Book Review* **$3.95** paper

☐ **THE HERMETIC WHORE by Peter Spielberg**
"...an absolutely lucid tensile style...bold and brilliant flights of imagination... short fiction in the best modern idiom." *Fiction International* **$3.95** paper

&

quality paperback editions at $3.95 each ($4.95) for books marked *

☐ **Althea** by J.M. ALONSO*
☐ **Babble** by JONATHAN BAUMBACH
☐ **Temporary Sanity by** THOMAS GLYNN
☐ **Take It or Leave It** by RAYMOND FEDERMAN*
☐ **The Talking Room** by MARIANNE HAUSER
☐ **The Comatose Kids** by SEYMOUR SIMCKES
☐ **The Second Story Man** by MIMI ALBERT
☐ **Things in Place** by JERRY BUMPUS
☐ **Reflex and Bone Structure** by CLARENCE MAJOR
☐ **Searching for Survivors** by RUSSELL BANKS
☐ **98.6** by RONALD SUKENICK
☐ **The Secret Table** by MARK MIRSKY
☐ **Reruns** by JONATHAN BAUMBACH
☐ **Museum** by B.H. FRIEDMAN
☐ **Twiddledum Twaddledum** by PETER SPIELBERG
☐ **Amateur People** by ANDREE CONNORS
☐ **Null Set** by GEORGE CHAMBERS
☐ **Moving Parts** by STEVE KATZ

To receive a **FREE** copy of STATEMENTS 2 choose one of the following:

☐ any 3 titles (check boxes above) for only $11.
☐ any 6 titles (check boxes above) for only $19.
☐ complete collection, all 18 titles for only $45.
(Individual titles may also be ordered by mail. Remit full price)

Please enclose check (N.Y. residents add tax.) Send to:
Fiction Collective, c/o English Dept., Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11210

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

"Perhaps the most important publisher of experimental prose in the U.S." **Choice.**

Also available at quality bookstores. Distributed by George Braziller, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Georgia Review

Spring 1978

FEATURING

*"A Metaphysic of Painting"—excerpts from the Notes of André Derain, translated and introduced by Rosanna Warren, with photographs of representative Derain paintings.

*Donald Hall's "Robert Lowell and the Literature Industry"

*Donald Greene's "'Tis a Pretty Book, Mr. Boswell, But—"

*Robert Boyers' "Secular Vision, Transcendental Style: The Film Art of Yasujiro Ozu"

*Willard Gatewood's "Recent Views of the American South"

*William Wasserstrom's "Phoenix on Turtle Island: D. H. Lawrence in Henry Adams' America"

PLUS

New poems by William Heyen, Philip Levine, Susan Ludvigson, Kathy Mangan, David Wagoner, Marilyn Waniek, Michael Waters, Paul Zimmer. Short stories by Roberta Gupta and Peter LaSalle. And a full complement of book reviews by leading American and British critics.

STILL only $3.00 *per year!* . . . "The best bargain in American publishing today." Available only by subscription order with payment enclosed.

Please enter my subscription to *The Georgia Review*:

.....1 yr/$3 .....2 yrs/$5 (Foreign add $1/yr.)

Name: .....

Address: .....

..... **Zip Code**.....

***The Georgia Review* is published quarterly at The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Should you subscribe to

the antioch review

Read our current issue . . .
and then decide.

featuring
"Informal
Essay As
Fiction"

Send two dollars
for current issue to:
The Antioch Review
PO Box 1048
Yellow Springs
Ohio 45387

or subscribe
$8 per year (four issues)
$14 for two years
$20 for three years

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The basic journal for keeping up with the culture of Latin America"
Library Journal

Review

TENTH ANNIVERSARY DOUBLE ISSUE

TEXTS: A 120-page, bilingual anthology of contemporary Latin American poetry with works by Lorenzo Garcia Vega, Alberto Girri, José Lezama Lima, Juan Liscano, Antonio Montes de Oca and Alvaro Mutis, selected and introduced by Octavio Armand.

FOCUS: A critical and biographical introduction to the work of Argentine writer Macedonio Fernandez, edited by Jo Anne Engelbert. Articles by Jorge Luis Borges, Adolfo de Obieta, Noé Jitrik, Edith Grossman and Naomi Lindstrom.

Collages by surrealist poet Ludwig Zeller as well as interview with the artist.

REVIEWS of recently published criticism and translations of Latin American fiction and poetry.

REVIEW is published three times a year.
One year subscription $7.00 — Institutions $10.00.
Single copy 10th Anniversary Double Issue $5.00.

Send order with check to REVIEW, 680 Park Avenue, N.Y., N.Y. 10021

Name ..... $ .....

Address .....

City, State, Zip .....

A publication of the Center for Inter-American Relations

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"... the most significant new humanities periodical in this country.... it has thus far enlisted the work of a virtual 'Who's Who' in the humanities."—**Journal of the University Film Association**

"The writing style is lively as it is scholarly, innovative as it is imaginative. ... This promises to be a major voice of the 1970s." —**Library Journal**

Critical Inquiry

Dedicated to reasoned inquiry into the principles and practice of criticism, the journal is characterized by a diversity of approaches from writers in a wide range of disciplines. Since its first issue in September 1974, **Critical Inquiry** has presented articles by eminent critics, authors, and scholars on topics including:

artists on art Jorge Luis Borges, Eugène Ionesco, Eudora Welty, Saul Bellow, Joyce Carol Oates, John Gardner
criticism M. H. Abrams, Jacques Barzun, Harold Bloom, Wayne C. Booth, Frederick Crews, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., J. Hillis Miller, Elder Olson
the visual arts James S. Ackerman, Giulio Carlo Argan, Rudolf Arnheim, Quentin Bell, E. H. Gombrich, Esther Jacobson-Leong, Harold Rosenberg
history and culture Dore Ashton, John G. Cawelti, Albert William Levi, Richard McKeon, Henry Nash Smith
film Robert L. Carringer, Gerald Mast, Christian Metz, Bruce Morrissette
literature Richard Ellmann, Stanley E. Fish, Northrop Frye, Geoffrey Hartman, Norman N. Holland, Jean Ricardou, Christopher Ricks, Barbara Herrnstein Smith
music Bertrand H. Bronson, Edward T. Cone, Philip Gossett, Leonard B. Meyer, Leo Treitler

Sheldon Sacks, *editor* **Wayne C. Booth and Robert E. Streeter,** *coeditors*
Published quarterly by The University of Chicago Press

Order form Critical Inquiry

One-year subscription rates:

☐Individuals $15.00 ☐Institutions $20.00 ☐Students $12.00
In countries other than USA add $1.50 to cover postage

Four-year charter subscriptions (September 1974-Summer 1978) are available.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State/Country_____ Zip____

Please mail with your check or purchase order to The University of Chicago Press, 11030 Langley Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60628

8/7 CL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chicago Review

an international quarterly of literature and the arts

Move with CHICAGO REVIEW

from JULY's vol. 28, no. 4

when . . . Joyce Carol Oates takes up Felix Krull's confessions where Thomas Mann left off . . . Yves Bonnefoy creates prose . . . John Mella takes *Hamlet* into "Shamlets" . . . Christopher Middleton analyzes writing as expression . . . Mark Turbyfill's paintings are rediscovered . . .

into SEPTEMBER's vol. 29, no. 1

to find . . . Aaron Siskind's new photographs . . . Paul Metcalf's study of John Brown . . . Maxine Kumin . . . David Wagoner's compelling "Songs of Only-One" . . . Eric Basso's complete novella, *The Beak Doctor* . . . Zen poems in calligraphy . . .

to NOVEMBER's vol. 29, no. 2

for . . . a bilingual anthology of postwar German-language literature and its criticism . . . featuring Paul Celan, now gaining recognition as one of the great European poets. Selections from Celan's previously untranslated poetry and essays . . . new Celan criticism . . . Peter Huchel's and Karl Krolow's poetry . . . work from the younger Swiss, German and Austrian writers . . . and much more . . .

subscribe today

Please enter my subscription to CHICAGO REVIEW

☐ one year $8.95 ☐ two years $15.95 ☐ three years $21.95

☐ I receive 1 extra issue free by enclosing payment now. ☐ Bill me

name _____

address _____

city _____ state _____ zip _____

CHICAGO REVIEW, Faculty Exchange Box C, The University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60637

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STORY of THE EYE
GEORGES BATAILLE

"The book which obliges us to confront the idea of pornography as a serious literary genre."
—Susan Sontag

"Bataille has survived the death of God."
—Jean-Paul Sartre

"Startling . . . ."
—Library Journal

". . . one of the most challenging and original writers of our century."
—Leo Bersani

"The book is truly outrageous, an exploration of the extreme possibilities of violation and profanation, made all the more effective in that they come to us in a serene and elegant prose."
—Peter Brooks,
The New York Times

$5.95

Translated by Joachim Neugroschel
(To be published this fall: Bataille's Blue of the Sky, translated by Harry Mathews.)

URIZEN

At your local bookstore or make check payable to:
Urizen Books, 66 West Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10007

Please send me _____ copies of **STORY OF THE EYE** at $5.95 per copy.

Name:_____

Address:_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Donald Hall is a man who knows poets. Not just the meter and the métier, but the men as well. A poet himself, he served as poetry editor of the *Paris Review* for seven years. He knew the giants. *Remembering Poets: Reminiscences and Opinions* is about four of those giants — T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Dylan Thomas, and Robert Frost. Refreshingly, Hall himself calls it "literary gossip." And that it is — personal observations of these great men as they went about the business of their lives. But *The New York Times Book Review* calls the book "a modern classic" and Hall a "great biographer" of the four who "...come before us as individual, fallible human beings trying to cope with the conditions of 20th-century living while yet not betraying their poetic calling."

ON DYLAN THOMAS: "He was the most gregarious man in the world, and took pleasure in talking with strangers, who were treated as friends if he liked them at all. His *real* friends — people from Swansea, or the first years in London, or wartime years — watched him perform with strangers and called him 'Instant Dylan.'"

ON T.S. ELIOT: "Eliot suffered in early and middle life, turned Christian, lived through a 'hard coming' to Christianity, and through painful middle age, but in old age he found honor, joy in a second marriage, and he died full of years and glory."

ON EZRA POUND: "He concentrated his attention on a matter gravely important. Fragments assembled themselves in half a second, turned strong, sharp, and insistent; then dissipated quickly, sank into flaccidity, depression, and silence. In 1960 — though I could not know it then — Pound was verging on the brink of silence, that personal inferno where he lived out the last decade of his life."

Drawings by David Schorr

Harper & Row
10 E. 53rd St., New York 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

available now from the Flushing office
BACK ISSUES OF THE PARIS REVIEW

No.			
	1	E.M. Forster Interview; William Styron, Terry Southern.*	$8.50
	2	Francois Mauriac Interview; Richard Wilbur, Robert Bly, Blair Fuller.*	8.50
	3	Graham Greene Interview; Evan S. Connell, Donald Hall.*	8.50
	4	Irwin Shaw Interview; Terry Southern, Alfred Chester.	8.50
	5	William Styron Interview; Samuel Beckett, Donald Hall.	8.50
	6	Alberto Moravia Interview; Italo Calvino, Cecil Hemley.	8.50
	7	Joyce Cary Interview; Picasso Portfolio; Mac Hyman, Evan S. Connell.	8.50
	8	Ralph Ellison Interview; Louis Simpson, John Phillips, George P. Elliot.*	8.50
	9	George Simenon Interview; Kenneth Tynan, Thom Gunn, James Wright.	8.50
	10	James Thurber Interview; Evan S. Connell, Zygmunt Haupt.	8.50
	11	Nelson Algren Interview; Jack Kerouac, Christopher Logue.	8.50
	12	Faulkner Interview; Thom Gunn, Gina Berriault, W.S. Merwin.*	8.50
	13	Dorothy Parker Interview; Jean Genet, Richard Yates.	8.50
	14	Isak Dinesen and Francoise Sagan Interviews; Masson Portfolio.	8.50
	15	Thornton Wilder Interview; Michaux, Terry Southern, Hughes Rudd.*	8.50
	16	Robert Penn Warren and Truman Capote Interviews; Robert Bly.*	8.50
	17	Frank O'Connor and Angus Wilson Interviews; John Wain, W.S. Merwin.	8.50
	18	Ernest Hemingway Interview; Giacometti Portfolio; Philip Roth.	8.50
	19	Henry Green Interview; Philip Roth, Niccolo Tucci, V.S. Naipaul.	6.00
	20	James Jones Interview; Chagall Portfolio; Philip Roth.	6.00
	21	T.S. Eliot Interview; N.Y. Artists; Terry Southern, Alexander Trocchi.	6.00
	22	Lawrence Durrell Interview; William Styron, James Dickey.	6.00
	23	Aldous Huxley Interview; Malcolm Lowry, Charles G. Finney.	6.00
	24	Boris Pasternak and Robert Forst Interviews; Gina Berriault.	6.00
	25	Robert Lowell Interview; Hughes Rudd, X.J. Kennedy.	6.00
	26	Marianne Moore and Ilya Ehrenburg Interviews; Malcolm Lowry, Mailer.	6.00
	27	Mary McCarthy Interview: Harry Mathews, Robert Bly, Denise Levertov.	6.00
	28	Pound and Henry Miller Interviews; Beckett, Borges, Alfred Chester.	6.00
	29	Katherine Anne Porter Interview; Durrell-Miller Letters; Malcolm Lowry.	6.00
	30	S.J. Perelman and Evelyn Waugh Interviews; Niccolo Tucci, 22 poets.	6.00
	31	Norman Mailer and Celine Interviews; Jack Kerouac, Henry Miller.	6.00
	32	Cocteau, Picasso and Wm. Carlos Williams Interviews; Charles Olson.	6.00
	33	Lillian Hellman Interview; R.V. Cassill, Jeremy Larner, Robert Creeley.	5.00
	34	De Beauvoir and Yevtushenko Interviews; Harry Mathews, Gary Snyder.	5.00
	35	William Burroughs Interview; Irvin Faust, Leonard Gardner, Ron Padgett.	5.00
	36	Saul Bellow Interview; William Styron, Robert Duncan, Barbara Guest.	5.00
	37	Allen Ginsberg and Cendrars Interviews; Charles Olson, Gary Snyder.	5.00
	38	Arthur Miller Interview; Brainard-Elmslie Portfolio, Rosalyn Drexler, "Lowry in England," James Salter, Leroi Jones.	5.00
	39	Edward Albee and Harold Pinter Interviews; E.E. Cummings Letters.	5.00
	41	Vladimir Nabokov Interview; Kenward Elmslie, Kenneth Koch, Philip Whalen, John Ashbery.	5.00
	42	Conrad Aiken Interview; Ed Sanders, Four French Poets.	5.00
	43	Jack Kerouac Interview: Ashbery-Schuyler collaboration; Francis Ponge.	5.00
	44	Creeley and I.B. Singer Interviews; James Salter, Diane di Prima.	4.00
	45	John Updike Interview; Edward Hoagland Journal: Tom Veitch, Richard Brautigan, Bill Berkson, Ron Padgett, Frank O'Hara.	4.00
	46	John Dos Passos Interview; Thomas M. Disch, Ted Berrigan, Kenneth Koch, Philip Whalen.	4.00
	47	Robert Graves Interview; Ed Sanders, Robert Creeley, Tom Clark.	4.00
	48	John Steinbeck and E.B. White Interviews; Michael Brownstein.	4.00
	49	Charles Olson Interview; Frank O'Hara, James Salter.	4.00
	50	Georges Seferis Interview; John Ashbery, Kenward Elmslie, James Schuyler.	4.00
	51	Pablo Neruda Interview; Harry Mathews, John Wieners, Michael McClure.	4.00
	52	Anne Sexton Interview; Joyce Carol Oates, Keith Cohen.	4.00
	53	John Berryman Interview; Joe Brainard, Allen Ginsberg, David Shapiro.	4.00
	54	Jerzy Koskinski Interview; Kenwood Elmslie, Allen Ginsberg.	4.00
	55	Eudora Welty Interview; James Salter, James Schuyler, Michael McClure.	4.00
	56	Anthony Burgess Interview; Jane Bowles, Erica Jong, Maurice Roche.	4.00
	57	Isherwood, Auden Interviews; Neruda, Merwin, Paley.	4.00
	61	Bernard Malamud Interview; Natalie Barney Garland, Wilbur, Eberhart.	6.00
	62	James Wright Interview; Wright Portfolio, Brainard, Christo, Donald Evans, Art Portfolios	4.00
	63	Donleavy, Steinbeck Interviews; Codrescu, Wiebe, Bly, Simpson, Tate, Matthews.	4.00
	64	Amis, Wodehouse Interviews; Disch, Benedikt, Halpern; Kunert, Vali Art Portfolio.	4.00
	65	Dickey Interview; Adams, Sadoff, Bly, Fox, Young, Kunet.	10.00
	66	Elkin Interview; Herrin, Midwood, Stern, Merwin; Le Gac Art Portfolio.	4.00
	67	Cheever, Wheelock Interviews; Boulanger, Kumin, Ignatow, Saroyan.	4.00
	68	Goyen Interview; Charles Newman, John Updike, William Stafford.	3.00
	69	Vonnegut Interview; William Burroughs, Ed Sanders, John Logan.	3.00
	70	Gass Interview; Peter Handke, William S. Wilson, Brendan Galvin, Galway Kinnell	3.00
	71	Jessamyn West and Marquerite Young interviews; Alfred Chester Profile; Arno Karlen Story: Ignatow and Jong Poems	3.00

*Reprint Edition

Payment should accompany order

Address orders to:

45-39 171 Place
Flushing, N.Y. 11358

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED